

## Floss every day to clean *between* teeth

Flossing can remove the plaque and food particles your bristles can't reach.

*While brushing removes plaque from tooth surfaces, flossing is also an essential step in maintaining your oral hygiene because it removes plaque from between teeth and below the gumline - where periodontal (gum) disease often begins.<sup>1</sup> Whether you use floss or select another type of interdental cleaner, ask your dentist how to use it properly so you can avoid injuring your gums.*

### How to Floss<sup>1,2</sup>

- Don't avoid cleaning between your teeth - even when it's awkward or uncomfortable.
- Break off about 18" (inches) of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty.
- Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers, leaving a 1"-2" length in-between. To floss your upper teeth, use your thumbs to guide the floss between the edges of your teeth. To floss your lower teeth, use your index fingers.
- When the floss reaches the beginning of the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth.
- Always use a gentle rubbing motion. Never "snap" the floss into the gums.
- Hold the floss firmly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.
- Repeat this method on all of your teeth.



### At age two or three you can begin to teach your child proper brushing and flossing techniques.<sup>1,2</sup>

- You will need to monitor brushing and flossing until age seven or eight, when the child has the dexterity to do it alone.
- Often there are natural spaces between the primary teeth to hold the place for the permanent teeth. If spaces are present, you do not need to begin flossing until the teeth touch. (This may occur in the molar areas first and you should floss your child's teeth until he or she is six or seven years old or until he/she can tie his/her own shoelaces). Then you should monitor their techniques and consistency.
- If your child has braces, be sure to look for special orthodontic toothbrushes and floss threaders.
- If you or a member of your family finds flossing awkward or difficult, ask your dental hygienist about other "interdental cleaning devices" such as special brushes, picks or sticks.

For healthy teeth and an attractive smile that last a lifetime, brush and floss daily, eat a balanced diet, and visit your dentist regularly!

*it's time to feel better*



<sup>1</sup>www.adha.org <sup>2</sup>www.ada.org "CIGNA Dental" refers to the following operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation: Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. and its operating subsidiaries and affiliates. This document is provided by CIGNA solely for informational purposes to promote consumer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. CIGNA assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations.  
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