



## Brush and Floss for Healthy Gums!

One of the easiest ways to help prevent gum disease is to brush and floss every day, so therefore it is very important to know the correct way to take care of your teeth and gums. It does not matter if you brush first or floss first, as long as you do both (twice a day!).

### Equipment

The most commonly used toothbrush is the manual toothbrush. Another option is the electric toothbrush, which uses electrical power to move the brush head. The resulting vibrations that are created gently clean the teeth. It is important to always choose a soft brush head when using either a manual or electric toothbrush, and to replace the toothbrush when the bristles begin to bend (or every two to three months).

According to a recent study in the *Journal of Periodontology*<sup>1</sup>, all dental flosses are equally effective. This means that it does not matter which type of floss you choose to use. There are many different varieties of floss, including waxed, unwaxed, flavored, and shred-resistant, so there is a type of floss out there for everyone!

### How to Brush

Position the toothbrush at a 45 degree angle where your gums and teeth meet. While applying slight pressure, gently move the brush in a circular motion using

short strokes. Use this method to clean the front of your teeth, then move to the back of your teeth, then the biting surfaces, and then your tongue, using the same gentle movements. Be sure you are constantly moving the brush head to avoid damaging your gums!

### How to Floss

Using about 18 inches of floss, wrap the floss around your middle finger. Wrap the rest around your other middle finger, leaving 2-3 inches of floss between your fingers. While tightly holding the floss between your thumbs, insert it between two teeth. Curve the floss into a "C" shape against the tooth, and gently slide it up and down. Then, with the floss still in between the two teeth, switch the "C" shape against the adjacent tooth, and repeat the sliding motion. Move to the next tooth over, and repeat the process, unwrapping fresh floss from your middle finger as you go.

For more information on brushing and flossing techniques, to learn other ways to prevent gum disease, or to find a periodontist in your area, visit [perio.org](http://perio.org).

<sup>1</sup>G Terézhalmy, R Bartizek, A Biesbrock. Plaque-Removal Efficacy of Four Types of Dental Floss. *Journal of Periodontology*. February 2008, Vol. 79, No. 2, Pages 245-251

<sup>2</sup>R Ide, T Hoshuyama, K Takahashi. The Effect of Periodontal Disease on Medical and Dental Costs in a Middle-Aged Japanese Population: A Longitudinal Worksite Study. *Journal of Periodontology*. November 2007, Vol. 78, No. 11, Pages 2120-2126



### Don't Forget your Checkup!

Daily brushing and flossing is one of the best ways to help prevent gum disease because it keeps the formation of bacteria-rich plaque to a minimum. However, you should be sure to visit a dental health professional, such as a periodontist, at least twice a year to have your teeth professionally cleaned and to screen for signs of periodontal disease.

Money may be tight in the current economy, but preventing gum disease can be less expensive than treating gum disease. Additionally, research<sup>2</sup> has found that people with gum disease can have higher health care costs than people without gum disease! Take the time now to regularly brush and floss to help prevent gum disease and avoid higher health care costs!

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM or visit [perio.org](http://perio.org) for more information on periodontal disease.