

Aloha, friends! Welcome back!

Ok, in the last video we covered what we consider to be an ‘unsung hero’ of oral hygiene routines: cleaning the tongue to help balance oral flora. And in this video, we’re going to dive into a well-known and often-disliked oral hygiene habit: flossing.

There is a lot of misinformation and cultural baggage associated with flossing, so this may be the most important of all of our oral hygiene foundation videos.

The way we see it, flossing has gotten a really bad rap. Both mainstream media and the alternative blog media have recently thrown flossing under the bus stating, “Flossing doesn’t do what we’ve always been told it did.”

You see, recent scientific studies indicate that flossing doesn’t lower the risk of tooth decay between our teeth. And unfortunately, the media jumped on this and spun it into a story that has lead the culture to questioning whether or not flossing is beneficial.

So, rather than throw the baby out with the bathwater, let’s unpack the topic of flossing by applying the same ‘Why/How/What’ structure we’ve been using throughout these educational videos.

Why do we floss?

If you take the conventional purpose for flossing as the ONLY reason to floss (that we floss to lower the risk of decay between teeth by clearing away the plaque that builds up in there), then it makes sense that in the wake of these studies, one would come to the inaccurate conclusion that flossing isn’t necessary.

But do we really floss *just* to stop tooth decay between our teeth?

Not in our opinion!

Flossing is super important because it disrupts and disorganizes the thug bugs implicated with gum disease in a very, very key place: the gum pockets between molars.

This is the area where gum disease is most likely to begin developing, so this is where we want to be especially careful to keep the biofilms thin and the thug bugs in check.

However, it’s really difficult to accomplish this with a toothbrush.

As you’ve learned, the Bass Brushing Technique can help. But even with the Bass technique, toothbrush bristles can only reach 1 to 2mm into the gum pockets.

On the other hand, floss can reach *4mm* into gum pockets.

So, for those of you who can't stand flossing, here's some bad news. :)

Flossing is really, really helpful in balancing our oral flora, particularly between molars where we really need the support.

But the good news is that later in this video, we'll share more information about an alternative you can try if you *really* can't stand flossing.

Again, from our view, the main reason why we floss is to thin biofilms and disrupt and disorganize the thug bugs implicated with gum disease, especially between our molars.

So, while new research suggests that flossing doesn't help reduce tooth decay, we still find flossing to be a very healthy oral hygiene habit (provided you floss correctly).

Which leads us from 'why floss' to 'how to floss'.

Ok, ready for more potentially bad news on flossing?

If we floss the wrong way, we could cause more harm than good.

You see, like we've always said, our gum tissue likes to be massaged. It likes to be stimulated.

However, our gum tissue does *not* like to be tortured. In fact, if we are too rough on our gum tissue, we can actually cause our gums to recede.

So, what's the right way to floss so we can benefit from it instead of causing harm?

Many years ago, we coined the term 'conscious flossing' to describe a specific flossing technique and differentiate between how we suggest you floss from how most people floss.

Essentially, 'conscious flossing' means we need to be gentle and mindful while flossing AND notice what the floss tells us during the process.

If you've watched our brushing videos, you'll recall that we used the term 'zombie brushing' to describe how most of us unconsciously brush our teeth. Well, zombie flossing is super common and definitely something we want to avoid, too.

First, we want to pay attention while flossing, gently working the floss between each set of teeth. This helps us to avoid snapping the floss down into the gum pocket, which stresses the gum tissue.

Paying attention also means looking at and smelling the floss segment after each contact point.

Like we discussed in the video when you filled out your Mouth Map, examining (and smelling) our floss after cleaning each contact point provides us really important information about the health of the gum tissue between those teeth.

Ok, now that we understand the foundations for conscious flossing, let's detail the actual technique.

1. You're going to use approximately 18 inches of floss.

While you may be able to get away with using less, until you're certain you don't have any active infection, we think it's important to use a longer piece of floss. This way, we can use a clean segment of floss between each two teeth.

You see, if we use the same segment of floss between multiple tooth connections, we definitely run the risk of helping thug bugs spread from one area of our mouth to another.

That's one of the reasons why we don't like those little plastic flosser picks--not only do they really risk harming the gum tissue by snapping down into the gum pocket, they also spread thug bugs from one gum pocket to another.

And flosser picks are single-use plastic pieces, which our global population must stop using if we want to provide any chance for our children and grandchildren to live on a healthy home planet.

For these reasons, we are not fans of these flosser picks and don't recommend them to anyone who is looking to navigate to optimal oral health. From our perspective, the risks clearly outweigh the benefits.

Ok, off my soapbox and on to the second step in conscious flossing...

2. Once you've cut your 18-inch floss segment, put a drop of our HealThy Mouth Blend on one finger. Then lay one end of your floss on the finger, pinch the floss between your finger and thumb, and draw the floss through the drop of HealThy Mouth Blend.

In this way, you are spreading the blend onto the entire string of floss.

This is a very powerful pro tip because we are using floss to deliver full-strength HealThy Mouth Blend 4mm down into gum pockets between molars, right where it's most needed to thin biofilms and disrupt thug bugs.

3. Ok, you have your floss segment cut and have put HealThy Mouth Blend on it if you choose to apply that pro tip. Now, we're going to wrap the floss around one finger 2-3 times, just enough to get the floss to hold.

If you really don't like the feeling of wrapping it around your finger or have young children who find this difficult, here's another great flossing strategy that a customer Meghan C shared with us:

Tie the floss into a circle like this. With the floss tied, you can now work around the circle using a little each time. This saves you from having to do so much wrapping and unwrapping around your fingers.

Choose whichever method works best for you.

4. Now we're going to gently work the floss segment between two teeth. Once it's in there, we have two surfaces to clean: one on each tooth. Here are some flossing technique pointers to keep in mind:
 - a. We want to hold the floss firmly but not super tight. In this way, we can wrap the floss around each tooth, or 'hug' the tooth with the floss, in the shape of the letter C. This helps the floss to touch more of the tooth surface than if we held the string too tightly.
 - b. We want to move the floss up and down 3 to 4 times on each side.
 - c. Also, when switching sides, be conscious to lift the floss over the gum tissue that's between the two teeth you're cleaning. It's most obvious in our front teeth, but our gum tissue comes up in a little triangle shape between all our teeth. So, we want to lift the floss up and over the gum tissue instead of trying to drag the floss straight across from one pocket to the other.
 - d. One last point here, be gentle yet firm. We want to follow the tooth down and take the floss as deeply into the gum pocket as we easily can.
 - e. Then lift out of that contact, look at and smell the section of floss you've removed to see if you've got anything going on between those teeth, and then move to the next clean segment of floss and repeat. Remember, pay extra attention between molars.

With that basic technique in place, let's cover a few extra pointers.

1. Many people don't like flossing because they think it makes their gums bleed, but while conscious flossing might stir things up, it is not the root cause of the bleeding (the infection below the gum line is actually the culprit).

Just please be patient and gentle on your gums. With your continued daily efforts to address the infection using your new oral hygiene routine (including conscious flossing), the bleeding will taper off over time and then stop.

Show the world your smile :)

So, keep up the daily conscious flossing to help address the infection and disorganize the thug bugs!

2. If you have crowns or inlays, you must be very careful when flossing. Speaking from experience here, if you have crowns or inlays, it's wiser to not lift the floss up out of the contact when you're done flossing that area.

Instead, allow the floss to slide out through one side, like this.

One time while traveling, I wasn't paying as much attention while flossing as I should have, and I popped out an inlay. So, please learn from the mistakes of others (mine, in this case) and use this alternate technique to remove the floss from between two teeth if you have crowns or inlays.

3. If you really don't like to floss or don't have the manual dexterity to effectively perform conscious flossing, we encourage you to look into getting an oral irrigator.

Oral irrigators can really help, but like we stated in a previous video, you must use them correctly, otherwise you risk causing more harm than good. They must be used at a very, very low pressure setting.

If you'd like a deeper dive on the strategies for how to use an oral irrigator, circle back to the video in the 'First Steps' module titled, 'Additional Helpful Tools'. In that video, we share two important distinctions for how to use an oral irrigator to make it a health-giving tool and not something that could cause harm in your mouth.

So that wraps up this video on why flossing is such an important oral hygiene habit. We hope this helps you better understand the reasons why flossing is so crucial for our oral and whole-body health.

We'll see you in the next video! Thank you! :)