

Flossing Your Teeth

- Dental health begins with good oral hygiene. Proper toothbrushing helps to remove the germs that live on your teeth (called plaque), from the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of your teeth. But plaque will still remain on your teeth unless dental floss is also used.
- Flossing will remove plaque from **between** your teeth, especially in those hard-to-reach areas **under the gumline**. Combining the use of dental floss with toothbrushing to thoroughly remove plaque each day will help to prevent cavities and a gum infection (periodontal disease).

How To Floss

First wrap an 18-inch piece of floss around the middle finger of each hand. Hold about an inch of floss tightly between your thumb and forefinger. Gently slide the floss between the teeth. Be certain not to snap the floss in, or you may hurt your gums. Press the floss against one side of the tooth and move the floss up and down the tooth several times, being sure to reach under the gumline.

Floss both sides of every tooth. When you move on to the next tooth, be sure to use a clean section of floss. Your gums may bleed slightly the first few days you use dental floss. They will become healthier if you keep flossing. If it is hard for you to use floss, try a floss holder that you can buy at a drug store or pharmacy. It is recommended that you regularly visit a dental office to maintain the health of your teeth and gums.

For more information, contact

**Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Oral Health
535 W. Jefferson St., Springfield, IL 62761
217-785-4899, TTY (hearing impaired use only) 800-547-0466**

NOTE: This fact sheet was derived from one previously published by the Arizona Department of Health Services.