

Smiles Better!

with **Dr. Nuala Devlin**
Causeway Dental
Practice, Ballymoney



Flossing time!

Many people make a point of brushing their teeth twice a day but feel that flossing is too difficult and takes too long. An increasing body of evidence suggests that proper dental care, including regular flossing results in fewer fillings and prevents gums disease. But if you're still not convinced that you should add flossing to your daily routine here are a few more reason to help you understand its benefits.

1: Flossing and Brushing Are More Effective Than Brushing Alone. While brushing your teeth twice a day will go a long way toward maintaining oral health, you're not getting the optimal cleaning if you leave the floss. A toothbrush works by physically removing plaque - a sticky,

bacteria-laden film - from your teeth with its soft bristles. Toothpaste enhances the effect of the toothbrush, and kinds that contain fluoride

help reduce the amount of bacteria in your mouth. But brushing has one big drawback: A toothbrush's bristles can't clean between the teeth or under the gums. That's where floss comes in. It's a tool specifically made to remove plaque from the tight spaces between the teeth and under the gums. You can floss before or after brushing, our hygienists suggest that flossing before you brush also helps make brushing more effective: With less plaque caught between your teeth, the fluoride in toothpaste can get to more parts of your mouth.

2: Flossing Protects Your Gums

It's easier to understand the role that flossing can play in good oral hygiene by seeing how teeth are situated in the gums and jaw. At the root of this structure, literally, are the bones of the lower and upper jaws. The jaws anchor the teeth by their roots, and the bones and roots are covered by the soft, sensitive tissue of the gums. The places where the gums and teeth meet are where flossing plays its major role. Tiny particles of food can get lodged here, and plaque in this area will harden and accrete over time to form tartar, a thick deposit that only the dentist can remove with a scraper. Tartar build-up can lead to gingivitis: red, swollen gums that are the first stage of gum disease. If left unchecked, the bacteria-laden tartar and plaque can spread even deeper below the gum line, causing periodontitis - severe gum disease.

3: Flossing Can Save You Money

In an era of rising health care costs it pays to take steps to reduce the cost of dental treatment. Ask any dentist what the most effective, cost-efficient tools are for protecting oral health, and you're likely to be advised on tooth brushing and flossing

4: Flossing Helps Prevent Other Diseases

Tooth and gum disease can have effects that go far beyond discoloured teeth, discomfort or bad breath. Extensive research has shown that the bacteria that flourish in an unhealthy mouth can harm the rest of the body. It's a small, simple step that can have huge implications for your long-term health

5: Flossing Prevents Tartar Buildup

Few parts of a regular dental visit are as uncomfortable as the scraping the dentist or hygienist must do to remove tartar. Once it's there, it can't be removed without professional help. But thanks to floss, health-conscious individuals have a powerful tool to fight this stubborn problem.

Have fun flossing!

Nuala