

Dental Bytes

Newsletter from the N.C. Oral Health Section

Winter 2011

FROM THE DESK OF DR. REBECCA KING

As 2011 begins, the N.C. Oral Health Section is busy preparing for *National Children's Dental Health Month* in February. Staff will be working in schools and community settings teaching children good oral hygiene practices and providing dental sealants. On February 4th, the OHS staff will be partnering again this year with the N.C. Dental Society in their *Give Kids a Smile!* (GKAS) project to provide free dental care and dental sealants to children. OHS staff identify children who need dental services and arrange for them to participate in GKAS. During February 2010, more than 1,660 dental professionals and volunteers provided

\$1.7 million dollars in oral health care to 15,544 children. This year's GKAS should be another successful project.

This edition of *Dental Bytes* has information and resources to use in the classroom during *National Children's Dental Health Month* and throughout the year.



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Section Chief
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We want your opinion about Dental Bytes. Please take a few minutes to complete a short survey of nine questions by 2/24/11. [CLICK HERE](#) Thank you for your input.

FOR YOUR DENTAL HEALTH

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How Diabetes Affects Oral Health



We read a lot these days about diabetes and the different treatments for managing the disease, but very little information is written about the changes that may occur within the mouth. No matter what your age, the single most important thing a person with diabetes can do to maintain a healthy mouth is to keep their blood sugar level as close to normal as possible.

If your doctor has not given you the desirable range for your blood sugar, the American Diabetes Association recommends a level between 70 – 130 mg/dL before meals and less than 180 mg/dL 1 – 2 hours after meals for adults. In children between the ages of 6 – 12, the target range is less than 183 mg/dL and for young people between the ages of 13 – 19 the blood sugar goal is less than 168 mg/dL. The measurement mg/dL refers to milligrams per deciliter. This is the measurement used by laboratories when glucose levels are interpreted. It is also the measurement that is recorded on glucose meters.

In addition to controlling blood sugar levels, it is important to thoroughly clean the mouth twice daily using dental floss and brushing with a soft bristle toothbrush for at least two minutes. People who have diabetes are more prone to inflammation of the gums when bacteria are allowed to

(continued from page 1)
grow in the mouth for twenty-four hours. Because of changing hormone levels, teenagers are more likely to experience bleeding gums while brushing if they have not been removing the bacteria well or controlling their blood sugar. When the blood sugar level is high, more sugar circulates in the saliva, providing more food for the bacteria, thereby enabling them to grow at a faster rate. High blood sugar dries out the mouth, making a person thirsty, which may prompt them to drink sugary beverages and the vicious improper oral health care cycle begins.

Once an infection develops in the gums, blood sugar levels that are not brought under control within the desirable range may require the dentist to place the person on antibiotics and recommend dental visits four times a year rather than the routine twice yearly visits. If the infection is not brought under control quickly, the bone which holds the teeth in place may be destroyed, allowing for movement of teeth and even loss of teeth. Since the bone does not normally regenerate, the mouth can be negatively affected for life.

Treat yourself right, keep blood sugar levels in the normal range, brush and floss daily and see your dentist for check ups twice a year or as often as your dentist recommends. Remember, good oral and physical health is up to you, so make the most of your opportunities. To learn more about diabetes, visit N.C. Diabetes Prevention and Control Branch Website.

Healthful Living SCOS and Grade Level Competencies: Grade 3, Obj. 2.01; Grade 5, Obj. 2.01

IN THE SCHOOLS

Dental Sealants: Effective in Preventing Tooth Decay

When you think of common childhood diseases, what do you think of? Does tooth decay come to mind? Tooth decay is one of the most common diseases among school aged children in North Carolina. Fortunately, though, it can be prevented. Proper toothbrushing, flossing, the use of fluorides and healthy snacking can all help in the fight against tooth decay. But, some areas of teeth need a little more protection. Dental sealants provide an additional option to help prevent tooth decay.

The chewing surfaces of the back teeth (molars) contain pits and grooves where food and plaque can collect. This makes these teeth more prone to decay. According to the Journal of the American Dental Association, about 90 percent of tooth decay is found in the pits and fissures of permanent back teeth and about 44 percent of tooth decay in primary (baby) teeth is found on the pits and fissures of molars. When dental sealants were placed on chewing surfaces of teeth, the average decrease in tooth decay among children age six through 17 years was 60 percent.



Student sealant project participants at Casar Elementary School in Cleveland County

Dental sealants are plastic coatings that are made especially for the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. Sealants fill in the pits and grooves and seal out decay. The procedure for placing dental sealants is quick, easy, safe and painless. A dentist, dental hygienist or dental assistant cleans and conditions the chewing surface of the tooth to be sealed. The sealant is applied in liquid form and hardens in a few seconds. The sealant application should last about five years. Sealants can be checked during regular check ups and replaced or added to if needed.

Dental sealants are a very important part of a comprehensive preventive dentistry program and one of the many

services provided by the N.C. Oral Health Section (OHS). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found school-based dental sealant programs to be effective public health measures to reduce dental decay. Your school may be selected to participate in a school-based or community-based dental sealant promotion coordinated and staffed by OHS public health dental hygienists. The projects are conducted in communities throughout the state where there are adequate facilities

and where OHS assessment data shows a high number of children at risk for tooth decay. By using the assessment data, OHS staff are able to use limited state funds effectively by providing dental sealants to children at high risk for tooth decay. Another goal of a sealant project is to educate children, parents and others about the need for sealants and to encourage other members of the community to seek sealants from a private dentist or clinic. For more information about dental sealants, contact your local public health dental hygienist or visit the [OHS Web site](#).

Healthful Living SCOS and Grade Level Competencies: Grade 6, Obj. 2.09

IN THE CLASSROOM

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

Dental health education can be taught throughout the year, but February is always a fun time to teach good dental hygiene practices because it is *National Children's Dental Health Month*. The following links provide additional resources and materials that you can use in the classroom. Most of the materials are free. Plan ahead and contact your public health dental hygienist to request a classroom presentation. Visit the [N.C. Oral Health Section Web site](#) to find educational materials and past editions of *Dental Bytes*.

More resources can be found at:

ADA National Children's Dental Health Month (materials in English and Spanish)
<http://www.ada.org/2934.aspx>

CDC Brush Up on Dental Health (materials in English and Spanish)
<http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/factsheets/brushup.htm>

NC Health Info
http://nchealthinfo.org/health_topics/diseases_conditions/DentalHealth.cfm

Crest - Teach Dental Hygiene in Your Classroom (materials in English and Spanish)
<http://www.crest.com/dental-hygiene-topics/teach-dental-hygiene.aspx>

Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Futures
<http://www.colgate.com/app/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/HomePage.cvsp>

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

Flossing 101

For most of us, brushing our teeth twice a day seems like enough dental care. We may be in a rush in the morning and tired at night. However, brushing only covers part of the tooth surface – getting in between the teeth with floss addresses the other parts of the tooth. As with almost everything else, flossing requires practice. Here are the basics of flossing:

- Use about an 18- to 24-inch length of floss and wrap most of it around the middle finger of one hand. Next, wrap all but about 4 inches around the second finger of the other hand. In order not to cut off circulation to your finger, try not to wrap your fingers too tightly.
- Use your thumb and index finger to guide the floss between your upper teeth. For the lower teeth, use your two index fingers. Slowly work the floss between two teeth with a gentle sawing motion. Never snap or force the floss in-between the teeth. It's a good idea to start in the same place each time you floss. That way you won't lose your place while flossing.
- Once you get through the contact area, pull the floss tight to the side of the tooth in a C shape. Gently move the floss under the gum line



(keeping it tight to the side of the tooth) until you meet resistance and then scrape the side of the tooth, moving away from the gum. When that side of the tooth is clean, move the floss up and over the tip of the gum between the teeth and do the side of the adjacent tooth.

- Once an area of floss becomes soiled with plaque, unwrap a clean section of floss from the hand with unused floss, and spin the used portion onto the other finger. Move on to the next space.
- Continue all the way around your mouth, using the same technique.

It's a good idea to rinse your mouth out periodically while flossing. Rinsing will help clear away the food debris and plaque you have dislodged. It also will show you if you are bleeding. While a little blood is no cause for alarm, chronic or excessive bleeding may be a sign of gum disease.

Now, what type of floss should you use?

There is a sea of dental care products to choose from. You can have waxed, unwaxed, thick, thin, flavored, plain, white, clear, black, and green floss. There is floss-on-a-stick in the form of holders (disposable and reusable) and even floss-threaders to floss around braces or under bridges. The best way to decide which is right for you is to try a few different types and see what works best for you.

On the last two pages of this newsletter are printable *How to Use Dental Floss* posters in English and Spanish to share with your students or children. Several Web sites can provide you visuals on this technique. Here is one Web site (<http://www.dental-picture-show.com/tooth-flossing/a1-dental-floss-technique.html>); there are more on You-Tube that you might want to check out.

Brushing twice a day and flossing once a day is important for your oral health. Contact your local public health dental hygienist to schedule a time for your class to get its own lesson on how to floss and brush.

Healthful Living SCOS & Grade Level Competencies: Grade 2, Obj. 2.01; Grade 3, Obj. 2.02.

FUN FACTS

Origins of Dental Floss

We use dental floss to clean plaque and food from between teeth where our toothbrush bristles cannot reach. It's a great idea, but when did dental floss become a part of routine dental hygiene?

Archaeologists claim evidence in ancient prehistoric skeletal remains of grooves caused by sticks and fibers used to clean between teeth. Historically, pointed sticks, plant fibers and even animal hairs have been used for this purpose.

The concept for modern use of dental floss is generally credited to a New Orleans dentist, Levi Spear Parmly, who began advising his patients in 1815 to use silk thread to clean between teeth. Parmly included his idea in a book he published in 1819, *A Practical Guide to the Management of the Teeth*, but he did not market floss commercially. It was not until 1882 that

the Codman and Shurtleff Company began mass producing a silk strand dental floss, and creating a standard for dental care. Johnson and Johnson patented and began marketing their own brand of silk floss in 1896 and are still manufacturing floss today.

Refinements in floss technology began in the late 1940's when, due to a war shortage of silk, nylon began replacing silk. A boom in floss usage in the 1950's fueled what has become an ongoing surge of innovation in floss design that has led to the use of exotic high tech materials such as Gore Tex® and other synthetic fibers.

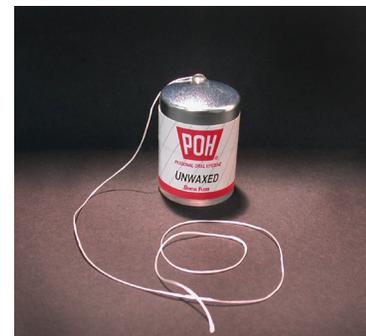
Whether we use animal hairs, silk or synthetic fibers, the necessity to clean between our teeth remains important to our dental health. We just have more cool things to use than our ancestors did.

From multiple sources, including:

www.ToothbrushExpress.com

<http://www.oralb.com/topics/TheHistoryofDentalFloss.aspx>

<http://www.yourdentalhelp.com/dental-care/dental-floss.html>



DENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Books:

Open Wide: Tooth School Inside by Laurie Keller

It's time for Tooth School, and Dr. Flossman is excited to meet the incoming class of 32 permanent teeth. There's just so much to learn, from brushing and flossing to dentin and pulp to every student's nightmare -- tooth decay! Spend a day in school with this goofy mouthful of pearly whites as they learn how to take care of themselves! (Ages 5 to 10)

Show Me Your Smile: A Visit to the Dentist by Christine Ricci

It's time for Dora's checkup at the dentist. Dora explores the dentist's office, gets her teeth cleaned, and more! She even gets a special treat for being such a good patient! (Age 3 to 7)

Remember:

Give Kids a Smile® Day
Friday, February 4, 2011

Contact your local state public health dental hygienist for events in your area.

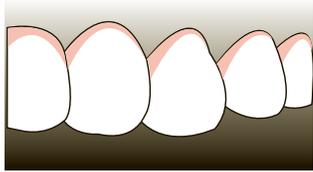


YOUR STATE PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL HYGIENIST

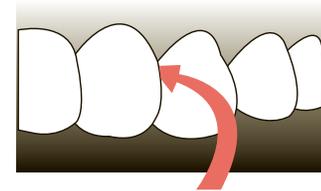
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How to use Dental Floss



Plaque likes to grow between your teeth and under your gums. Plaque causes dental problems.

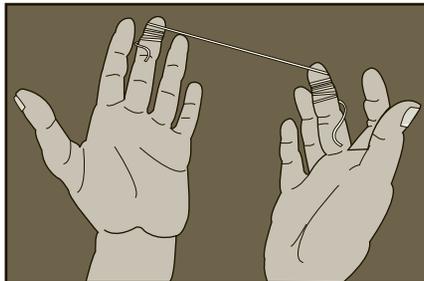


Dental floss removes the plaque growing between your teeth and under your gums.

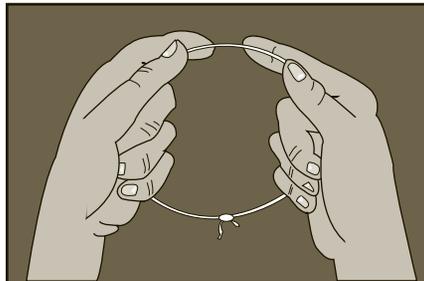


How to Hold Dental Floss

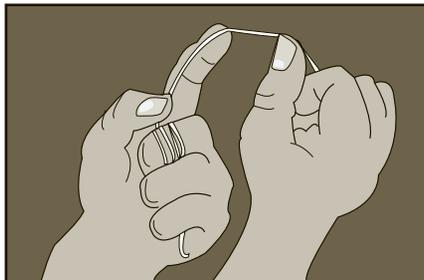
How to Floss Your Teeth



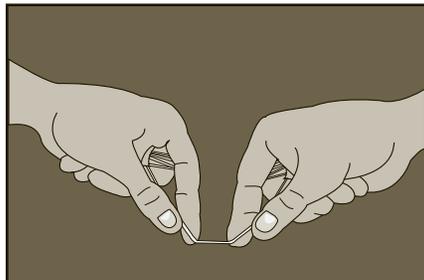
Wrap about 2 feet of floss around the middle fingers of each hand, or...



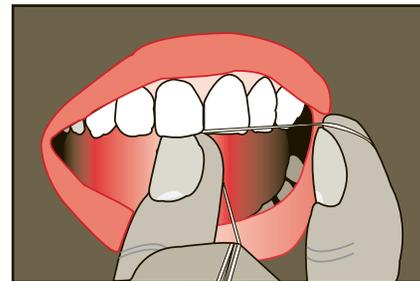
...make a loop by tying the ends together.



Use your thumb and index finger to guide the floss between your upper teeth.



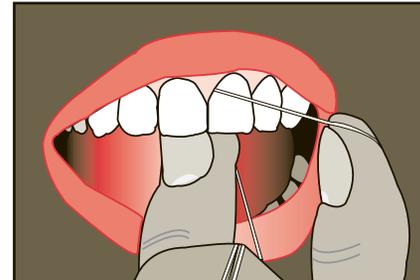
To clean the lower teeth, slip the floss down with your index fingers.



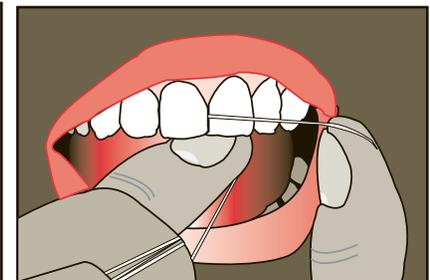
1. Work the floss gently between your teeth.



2. Bend the floss around the tooth in a U-shape.



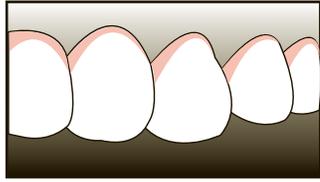
3. Pull the floss against the tooth. Move the floss gently under the gum until you feel the pressure.



4. Hold the floss firmly against your tooth and scrape the plaque from the side of your tooth in one pull.

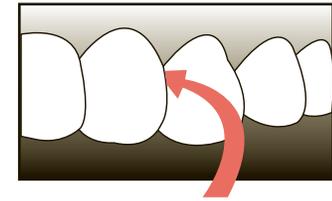
Move to a clean area of floss after every 2 or 3 teeth.

Be sure to floss both sides of each tooth.



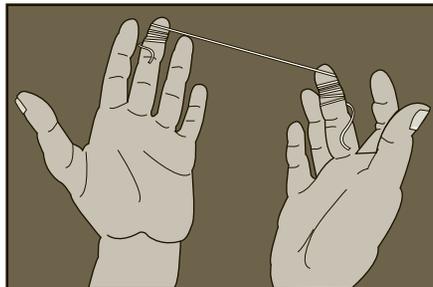
La placa crece entre sus dientes y debajo de sus encías. La placa causa problemas en sus encías.

¿Cómo se Utiliza el Hilo Dental?

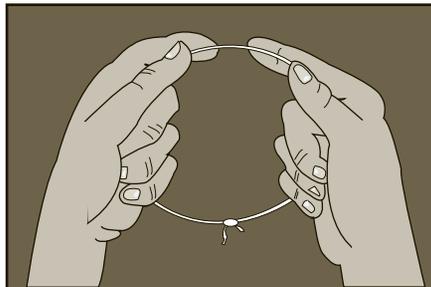


El hilo dental remueve la placa que crece entre sus dientes y debajo de sus encías.

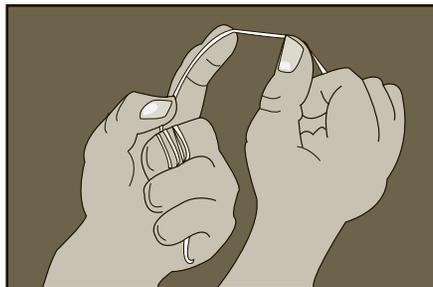
¿Cómo se sostiene el hilo dental?



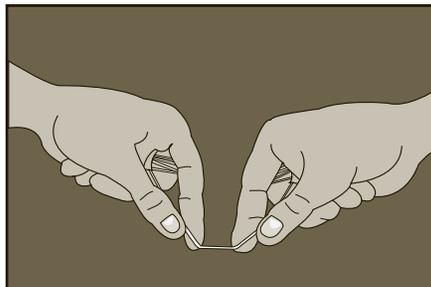
Primero corte aproximadamente 2 (dos) pies. Segundo, rodee los dedos medios de cada mano, o...



...haga un lazo, atando los extremos.



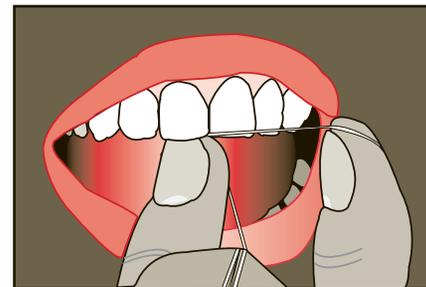
Utilice su pulgar (dedo gordo) y el dedo índice para guiar el hilo dental entre sus dientes superiores. (los dientes de arriba)



Para limpiar los dientes inferiores (los dientes de abajo), deslice el hilo dental hacia abajo con sus dedos índices.

Utilice un área limpia por cada 2 o 3 dientes.

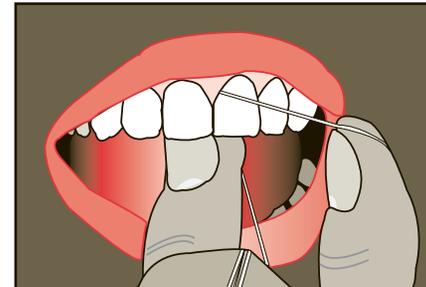
¿Cómo se utiliza el hilo dental?



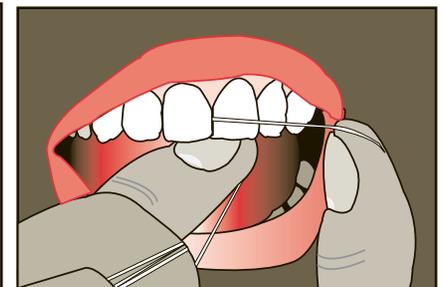
1. Mueva suavemente el hilo dental entre sus dientes.



2. Doble el hilo dental en forma de U alrededor del diente.



3. Hale el hilo dental en contra o hacia el diente que usted quiere limpiar. Mueva el hilo dental suavemente por debajo de la encía hasta que sienta presión.



4. Sostenga el hilo dental firmemente en contra de su diente y raspe la placa de su diente con un tirón.

Asegúrese de utilizar el hilo dental en ambos lados de cada diente.