



American Academy of Periodontology

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STATEMENT FROM THE AAP ON FLOSSING EFFICACY

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The American Academy of Periodontology recommends daily flossing as one part of a regular oral hygiene routine, which also includes brushing your teeth twice a day and ensuring you receive a comprehensive periodontal evaluation every year. The accumulation of plaque bacteria beneath the gum line may cause an inflammatory response which ultimately leads to gingivitis, a mild form of periodontal disease. If left untreated, periodontal disease can worsen, leading to tooth loss and increased risk for other systemic disease such as diabetes and heart disease. Flossing allows for the removal of plaque bacteria and debris from areas in the mouth that brushing alone cannot reach.

Periodontal disease is a condition that can result from a number of risk factors, including family history, presence of other systemic conditions, and age. Flossing—as part of a regular oral hygiene routine—is only one component of maintaining periodontal health. That’s why it is crucial that patients receive an annual comprehensive periodontal evaluation and seek treatment from a periodontist, a dentist with specialized training in diagnosing and treating periodontal disease, when needed.

Because the development of periodontal disease is slow in nature and because a variety of factors can impact its progression, studies that examine the efficacy of daily flossing are best conducted over a number of years and among a large population. Much of the current evidence does not utilize a large sample size or examine gum health over a significant amount of time. Additionally, many of the existing studies do not measure true markers of periodontal health such as inflammation or clinical attachment loss. In the absence of quality research, patients should continue to include flossing as a part of their daily oral hygiene habit.