



## **PATIENT INFORMATION**

### **FLOSSING TECHNIQUE**

#### **What is the best flossing technique?**

It is best to ask your dentist or hygienist for a demonstration before taking up flossing. Generally, however, it is advised that you:-

- Take a length of floss about 18 inches long (approximately an arms' length).
- Wrap the ends around the middle fingers of each hand, leaving 2-3 inches between the fingers.
- Using the forefingers and thumbs to grasp the floss near the middle, slide the floss into the space between two teeth. Be careful not to force or snap the floss between the gum line. If the contact between the teeth is very tight, gently slide the floss horizontally forward and back until it squeezes through. You may also find waxed floss easier to use in tight areas.
- Curve the floss in a "C" shape around the tooth with fingers as close to the tooth as possible.
- Move the floss up and down the side of the tooth several times gently stroking the plaque away from the gums and off the teeth.
- Then pull the floss out of the space between the teeth.
- Wind more floss onto one middle finger and off the other to reveal a fresh piece as it becomes soiled.
- Repeat with the side of the next tooth and continue around the mouth.

You may wish to rinse after flossing to remove any loose plaque.

#### **What does it mean when gums bleed after flossing?**

Often, if you are new to flossing or do not floss regularly, your gums may bleed. This is a sign that the gums are inflamed because of gum disease.

#### **Can flossing damage gums?**

No, not if you floss properly. This is why it is important to ask your dentist or hygienist for a demonstration. When flossing, remember to be gentle and do not move the floss too vigorously up the side of the teeth. If you experience pain when flossing, it probably means that you are pushing the floss too far under the gum margin.

### **What type of floss should I use?**

There are different types of floss and tape on the market. Some are waxed to allow them to slide between tightly packed teeth more easily and some are unwaxed. Some are fluoride or flavour-enhanced. Choose the floss that you find the most comfortable and easy to use. Your dentist/hygienist may recommend a particular type of floss. There is no clinical or trial evidence to date to show that fluoride or anti-bacterial additions to floss make them better for dental health.

