# To Floss or Not

What do dentists say?

December 5, 2016 By Kate Ferguson

Recently, a huge new study found that evidence supporting the benefits of flossing, at this point, is “weak, very unreliable” and of “very low quality.” But despite the findings, many dentists say they’ll keep recommending that people floss regularly, moving the string up and down between their teeth at least once each day, as a way to prevent cavities and gum disease.

Researchers note that although the first use of floss is unknown, scientists have found items (think horsehair and twigs) for cleaning between teeth in the mouths of prehistoric humans. (Even back then, folks couldn’t stand having food particles trapped in these spaces.) As years passed, dentists endorsed the practice as a key to proper oral hygiene.

Today, the advice of the American Dental Association (ADA) remains as firmly fixed as dental implants cemented in place. The nation’s largest dentists’ association, which represents more than 159,000 members and is the leading advocate for oral health, suggests that flossing is an essential part of tooth and gum care.

The ADA’s members stress that “cleaning between teeth removes plaque that can lead to cavities or gum disease from the areas where a toothbrush can’t reach.”

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