



# Water Flossing vs. Traditional Flossing

## Is water flossing as effective as dental string flossing?

### Traditional Dental String and Finger Method

Flossing in combination with brushing is the most effective way of preventing gum disease and cavities. Flossing dislodges food and bacteria trapped between teeth that brushing alone cannot reach. With advances in technology, we now see alternatives to traditional flossing, such as water flossing. But, is it as effective as the traditional floss around the finger method?

How to floss with dental string:

- Break 18 to 24 inches of dental floss
- Wrap the floss around your middle fingers and leave about 2 inches of floss.
- Hold the floss by pinching it with your thumbs and index or middle fingers.
- Gently see-saw the floss between your teeth and create a letter “c” around the tooth you’re flossing
- Gently scrape up and down to remove plaque and food debris
- Repeat on other teeth

If the contact (area where the teeth touch) is too tight, use waxed floss and gently pull the floss through the space between the teeth. Improper flossing with dental string can cause gum recession and bleeding by pulling the floss too hard through the spaces or snapping the floss through the contact.

### Water Flossing

Water flossing uses a device (like a Waterpik) that aims a stream of water at the teeth and gum. The process helps remove dislodged food, and penetrates periodontal pockets by removing plaque or food trapped between the teeth. Some water flossing devices may have more than one setting on water pressure and water delivery; be sure to read and follow the manufacturer’s instruction carefully. Improper use of water flossing machines can damage the gums if the water pressure is set too high. While multiple studies have shown water flossing to be more effective in reducing gum bleeding, in comparison to traditional string flossing, it may not be as effective at removing all harmful bacteria. Water flossing machines are also more expensive and require being plugged in or charged. Whether you opt to floss with traditional floss or with a water flosser, discuss with your dentist to ensure the correct technique is being used.



### Which Flossing Method is Right for You?

Flossing is a vital part of an oral hygiene routine as plaque is the leading cause of gingivitis (gum disease). Your dentist will select which floss method is the best option for you based on your daily routine, oral health, dexterity, position of teeth, and whether you have braces.



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