

## Basics of Oral Health 4

# How to Floss

**Instructions:** Explain that good home care can really make a difference to prevent cavities and keep a mouth healthy. Brushing is one part—flossing is the other. Flossing cleans off the food and germs where the toothbrush cannot reach in between the teeth.

You won't get rid of all the germs but you can sure make it hard for those germs to take over! The germs are like these plastic cups. *Hold up plastic cups*. They get together and build sticky plaque walls. *Stack the cups on a table*. If we leave them they will get stronger and stronger and take over the whole mouth. If we floss them every day we can break down their walls. *Knock cups over*.

Every day they will start over again (*build a smaller stack*), but if we keep flossing them away every day we can keep them under control. (*knock them down again*)

When flossing, at first the gums may bleed. This is normal. Don't worry and don't stop flossing! Floss every day and the gums will get healthier and will stop bleeding.

Let's learn the right way to floss. Working with a partner, one of you uses your yarn as floss. The other one holds up your fingers as if they were teeth lined up in a mouth and your partner will floss between your fingers. Some teeth are very tight together!

Wrap "floss" around your middle or index fingers to get a firm grip. Hold between thumb and finger.

Gently slide the floss down between two teeth (*two fingers*); now wrap the floss toward one tooth, (*finger*) hugging it as you gently slide it back up and out.

Gently slide it down in the same place; wrap it toward the neighbor tooth, hugging that one as you gently slide it back up and out.

Repeat this process to all teeth—remember to hug that back tooth even if it is the last one in line.

Always use a clean piece of floss between teeth.

Never snap or force floss as this may cut or bruise gum tissue.

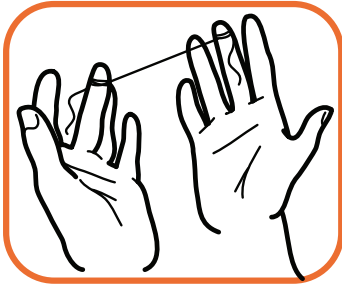
### Supplies

- Plastic cups that stack.
- A piece of yarn about 12-18" long.
- "How to Floss" handout.

## Discussion and Parent Practice Handout

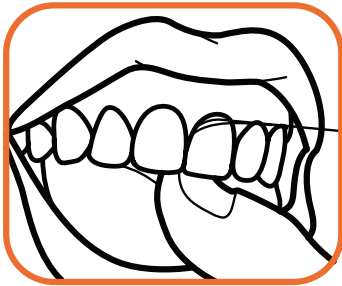
- Children cannot floss by themselves. It is a parent's job. Floss your child's teeth when the sides of your child's teeth touch each other.
- And remember, you're an important role model for your child! Children need to see you floss your teeth, too.
- Open the discussion up for questions.
- This handout has some helpful flossing tips.

# How To Floss



Wrap the floss around your middle or index fingers to get a firm grip.

Hold between your thumbs and fingers.



Gently slide the floss between two teeth. Then wrap the floss toward one tooth, hugging it as you gently slide it up, back, forth, and down.



Repeat this process on all teeth. Remember to hug that back tooth even though it is the last one in line.

## Remember...

- ✓ Always use a clean piece of floss between teeth.
- ✓ Never snap or force floss as this may cut or bruise gum tissue.
- ✓ Children cannot floss by themselves, they need your help.
- ✓ Start flossing your child's teeth as soon as teeth touch.
- ✓ It will help your child learn good habits if they see you floss.

