

Should you use dental floss before or after brushing your teeth?

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You probably already know that flossing and brushing are both essential. But which step should you do first? Dentists say there's a correct order to flossing and brushing. Doing one before the other can help remove food particles, making the second step more effective.

Here's what experts say about whether you should use dental floss before or after brushing your teeth.

Why do we need to use dental floss?

Using dental floss involves threading a thin object (usually a special string) between the teeth and moving it around to help remove any debris that shouldn't be there, thereby supporting overall oral health.

" *Using dental floss is a simple but crucial step in maintaining oral health, as it removes debris and plaque from places a toothbrush can't reach* ," says Ashley Boling, dentist and owner of Aspen Dental in Hixson, Tennessee. " *This reduces the risk of cavities, gum disease, and other oral health problems.* " As mentioned above, those oral

health problems can also put you at risk for other systemic health issues.

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It might sound counterintuitive to floss between teeth that you know are still dirty, but **it's best to floss first and then brush**. 'Flossing first helps remove food debris and plaque between teeth—areas a toothbrush can't reach. Cleaning those spaces not only reduces the risk of cavities and gum disease, but also allows the fluoride in toothpaste to reach more tooth surfaces. That means stronger enamel, healthier gums, and better protection against cavities.'

You can use dental floss before or after brushing your teeth as long as you do it thoroughly and reach areas that a toothbrush can't. However, flossing beforehand can help remove food particles and plaque, making brushing more effective.

Common mistakes to avoid

1. **Improper flossing technique:** Pulling floss forcefully against the gums can damage the mucous membrane. Gently thread the floss in a C-shape along each tooth.
2. **Using too much pressure when using a water flosser:** Start with low pressure and gradually increase it. Too much pressure can irritate the gums or cause bleeding.
3. **Brushing too hard:** Brushing too hard or using a hard-bristled toothbrush can wear down tooth enamel and irritate the gums. Use a soft toothbrush with gentle, circular motions.

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