

Interdental Aids

Interdental (between teeth) cleaning is important. It removes plaque (a sticky film) where a toothbrush cannot reach and helps prevent dental (tooth) decay and gum disease.

There are many ways to adapt interdental cleaning. This can make it easier for older adults to clean between their teeth on their own.

For Teeth Close Together:

Traditional string floss works well for teeth that are close together.



For Teeth With Gaps:

Choose the largest interdental aid that fits comfortably between your teeth. Never force it.

Dental toothpicks (also called dental wood sticks) fit into very tight spaces between teeth.



Interdental brushes (and smaller **soft picks**) come in different sizes. Some are disposable. These should be thrown away after being used.

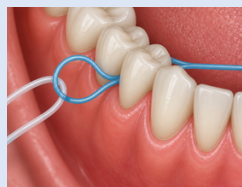
Others have reusable handles with replaceable brushes. These should be cleaned like a regular toothbrush.



Water flossers (or water picks) use a strong water spray to clean between the teeth and around the gums.

For Teeth Fused Together:

Floss threaders help get string floss into hard-to-reach areas between teeth. They work well for teeth that are fused together (e.g., bridges).



For Extra Help When Arm or Hand Movement is Difficult:

Floss handles help people who have trouble holding traditional string floss. They come in different shapes and sizes.

Some floss handles are reusable. They can be used many times. After each use, they should be rinsed and the floss should be thrown away.



Some floss handles are disposable. These should be used one time and then thrown away.

How to Properly Use a Floss Handle:

1. Place the floss in between two teeth at the chewing surface (top of the teeth).
2. Gently push the floss into the space between the teeth.
3. Pull the floss to the side of one tooth.
4. Move it up and down to clean that side.
5. Pull the floss to the side of the other tooth.
6. Move it up and down to clean that side.
7. Repeat the same steps for the rest of your teeth.

