

## The Importance of Dental Floss in Improving Children's Oral Health

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Today, many children are suffering from oral and dental illness, psychological, emotional and learning problems from untreated diseases of the mouth and teeth, because they did not receive preventive, educational and therapeutic services on time; and parents did not pay enough attention to these matters.

Many parents think that their child's teeth do not have much importance in their oral health, because their primary teeth finally would be lost. But pediatric dentists do not have such a view and believe that the primary teeth should be cleaned like permanent teeth as soon as they erupt. Starting dental care from the earliest years of birth causes the daily habit of brushing and flossing in the children.

Dental practitioners have recommended that children should be taken to a dentist after the first tooth has erupted. The first visit to the dentist helps parents and the doctor understand the special needs of the child, and learn how to handle his or her problems. Keep in mind that parents can easily prevent the occurrence of a large number of teeth problems in the child or the dental problem can be easily treated at an early stage. Referring to the dentist at the age of one can help maintain the child's oral health. At childhood, the dentist can present a child-friendly education about the importance of brushing and using dental floss.

Using toothbrushes and dental floss is one of the most important factors in preventing tooth decays and gum diseases, and since the toothbrush is not able to clean the interdental surfaces, the use of dental floss is the best and most commonly used tool for clearing the interproximal spaces, which is essential for the child's oral health program [1,2].

According to the American Dental Association's recommendation, at least one-time daily use of dental floss is essential in order to reach the desired level of oral hygiene [1]. In a study, Houjoel and *et al.* found that the use of dental floss for about one year among children aged 4 to 13 years reduced the risk of dental decay by 40% [3].

Mother is an important part of the child's environment, which plays a significant role in the development of the child's oral hygiene habits [4]. The use of dental floss is required as soon as two teeth erupt side by side of each other. However, at the age of 3 to 6, the role of the child becomes slightly more intense in oral health, but still mothers are the main supplier of children's oral and dental health; and since the use of dental floss requires skill, parents carry this important task until the children learn the proper way to use dental floss [1,5].

In the following, we will focus on the most important points about education and the importance of the use of dental floss in children.

## **The Time to Start Using and Teaching Dental Floss for Children**

Teaching dental care for children is very difficult, but at the beginning of childhood, oral hygiene education makes the teeth stay healthy, and kids have a beautiful smile. The use of dental floss is essential for maintaining oral and dental health; all parents should teach their children how to use dental floss. Children should use dental floss at an early age when their posterior teeth are in contact with each other. Parents should keep cleaning children's teeth until the baby grows older. When the baby grows up, parents should stand next to him, and make sure he uses the correct way of flossing. Parents should remember that children can usually use dental floss alone at the age of 6 or 7 [6].

It is even difficult and unpleasant for adults to use dental floss, and this action will certainly be harder for children with small hands. Therefore, parents should teach the dental flossing techniques to their children, and of course, they should have enough patience to do this. When the kid's permanent teeth are erupting, the plaques and food particles are bundled between them, and if they are not cleaned, it will cause the tooth decays and periodontal diseases. Therefore, parents should teach them the correct way of using dental floss, and ask them to use dental floss at least once a day.

## **Dental Flossing Techniques**

1. Do not cut the size of the dental floss too short so that the child can easily clean his teeth. Cut a half of meter of dental floss.

2. Wrap dental floss around kid's finger. Apply one end of the thread around his middle finger of one hand and the rest of the floss around the middle finger of the other hand.
3. Gently guide kid's fingers and teach him how to move the floss between his teeth. With the help of thumb and index fingers, move the floss gently between his 2 teeth and move slowly down to reach the gingiva. Be careful not to damage his gums.
4. Teach him to move the floss in C state between his teeth and clean the sub gingival area down to that extent which is possible, but point him out to be careful not to push down the floss hard between the teeth.
5. When the floss reaches close to gingiva, give a small horizontal movement and pull the floss upward gently.
6. Now, loosen a piece of taller floss from one hand, and wrap the used part around the other finger, and then do this move for 2 other next teeth. Do not forget the permanent molars teeth.
7. After finishing flossing, let the child brush his teeth and observe his brushing technique.

### **Factors Involving in Negligence of Dental Flossing**

During these two decades, as a pediatric dentist, I gathered information on why most parents do not consider the use of dental floss for their children. There are many factors involved in this matter. The most important are listed below:

- A. Considering the role of primary teeth as insignificant factor
- B. Needless to use of dental floss
- C. Misconceptions about complications of using dental floss
- D. Maternal prediction about the child's unwillingness to use dental floss
- E. Fear of putting aside tooth brushing
- F. Useless to use for decayed teeth
- G. The lack of behaviour of using dental floss in the family
- H. Lack of proficiency
- I. Use only when needed
- J. Laziness and impatience of mother and child
- K. Lack of necessary child's skills
- L. Lack of knowledge about the importance of dental floss

## **Application of the Innovative Methods to Encourage the Child to Use Dental Floss**

Sometimes, despite practicing and educating the child, the use of dental floss and oral hygiene becomes a challenging issue. Parents can turn tooth brushing and flossing teeth into a game. While doing this, they also can give their children enough information. Parents, having given a small toothbrush to the child, will encourage him to clean his favorite dolls' teeth. At the same time of child's brushing, parents should brush their teeth also. Then give him a piece of dental floss to clean his dolls' teeth. After that, the parents should begin to clean their teeth with floss. In this case, the child can learn how to properly use dental floss and brush at the same time. They also can demonstrate, and combine the technique of brushing and flossing with fun.

Encouraging the child to dance while he is brushing his teeth, and making a funny face on the mirror, will make the kid doesn't feel bored of brushing, and give him self-confidence about the cleanliness of his teeth.

Teaching a child about how to properly use dental floss is a part of parental work and the main part is to encourage the child to use it continuously. Using the following tactics, parents can make enjoyable the use of dental floss and toothbrushes for their children.

Children love to work together, so brushing and using dental floss as a family activity can be appealing to them, consequently, parents can try to plan in such a way that they can brush and floss their teeth with their children simultaneously. Children also love to imitate, and they brush their teeth easily with their parents. The child should be allowed to brush and floss alone, and get familiar with brushing skills.

It may be difficult and discouraging for children to use the correct way of dental flossing. Fortunately, today, there are various types of dental floss on the market that can attract the attention of the child. It is advisable to purchase soft floss that matches the child's gums. Some dental floss on the market has good flavours that can encourage children to use those. Dental flosses are available in large packages that are affordable. Dental floss is disposable, so parents have to be sure that their children discard it after using.

## **The Necessity of Using Dental Floss in Children**

The use of dental floss is recommended when two teeth are in contact (whether primary or permanent). Initially, it is necessary for parents to do this so that the child will learn over time how to pass floss between his teeth alone.

Children from the age of 6 to 7 can brush and floss without the help of the elderly, but before reaching this age, parents should have a direct monitoring of their brushing. They should watch parents brushing and flossing techniques regularly so that look at them as good models to learn the correct ways of brushing and flossing.

Regarding the excessive use of carbohydrates, sweets and sugary foods, as well as junk foods, the requirement for the use of dental floss in children becomes more pronounced. The sooner the child is taught to use dental floss, the more likely it is to become habitual, and part of every day of his life. At least up to 10 years of age, they should be monitored. It's important to note that the proper use of dental floss for children ages 9 to 12 is without the need for any assistance and is also easier.

## **The Importance of Dental Floss to Prevent Tooth Decay**

As soon as two teeth erupt and come into contact, the flossing should start once a day. Despite dental floss can eliminate food particles and plaque between teeth, it's not possible to do this by brushing normally, consequently, the role and significant impact of dental floss on the oral health of children is evident here.

Passing dental floss between the teeth can make a big difference in preventing tooth decays. Hence, it is good that parents, starting flossing when teeth are in contact with each other (that is, around the age of 2.5 years). Ideally, toddlers' teeth should be flossed every night before going to bed. But if there are excessive dental distances, these frequencies are too high for this age, the flossing should be repeated at least twice a week.

To inspire, children will be given a book with photos of healthy teeth and gums. He will be explained that using dental floss could result in a better result. In a simple explanation way, he should get aware of complications and consequences of negligence in oral health.

## **The Last Words**

It seems that the culture of the use of dental floss has still not penetrated into some families. This requires extensive training and promotion of dental care and the habit of using dental floss among families. A series of factors, such as inappropriate mother's attitudes; behavior, knowledge, and skills of mother and child; and the mental and emotional state of both mother and child affect this matter. Of course, what's important is that parents should start starting to use dental floss for their children from younger ages. Instead of forcing them to do that, applying innovative methods can be a solution to encourage them to use dental floss without any fussing and grouching.

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