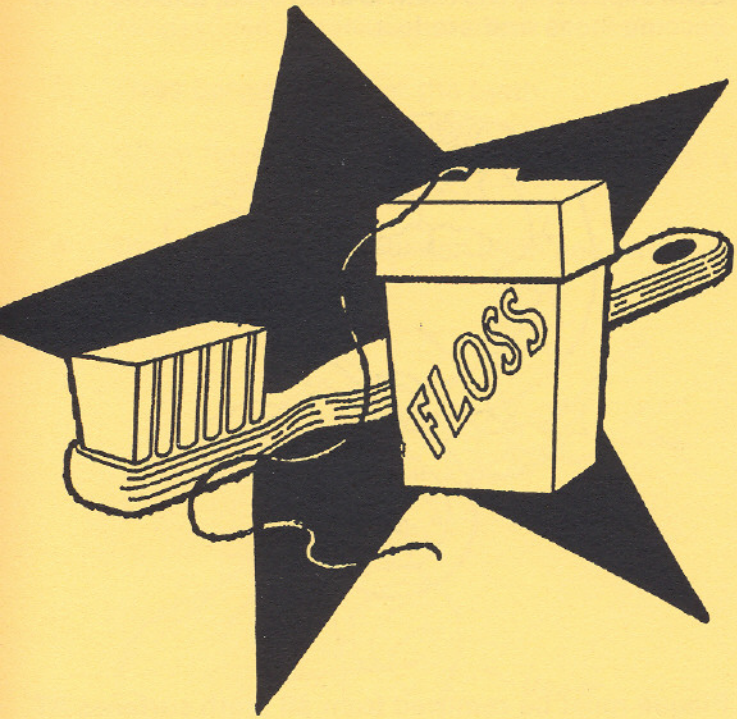
DO-IT-YOURSELF DENTAL CARE



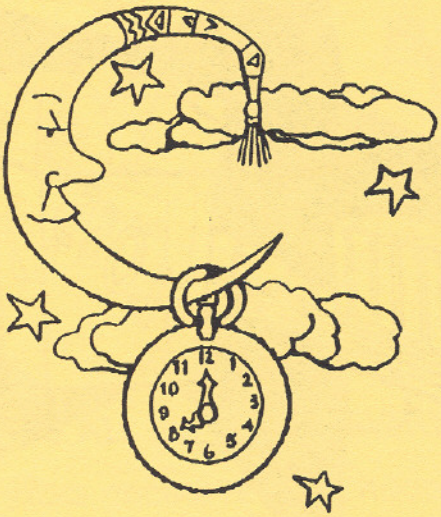
Regular dental checkups will help prevent needless loss of teeth, but only YOU can give your mouth the daily cleaning needed to keep your teeth and gums healthy.

PLAQUE

The main cause of dental disease is **PLAQUE** — a sticky film of bacteria that forms continuously on the teeth.

PLAQUE CAUSES TOOTH DECAY. Bacteria in plaque change food sugars into acids which dissolve the tooth structure.

PLAQUE CAUSES PERIODONTAL (GUM) DISEASE. Acids and toxins produced by the bacteria in plaque cause an infection in the gums. The gums become red, puffy, and may bleed easily. As plaque builds-up, it hardens into calculus (tartar). Eventually, the plaque/calculus deposits, and the associated infection, cause the gums to separate from the teeth, the bone supporting the teeth is destroyed, and the teeth become loose and are lost.



Plaque must be removed from all tooth surfaces AT LEAST ONCE A DAY.

Once removed, it takes 24 - 30 hours for bacterial plaque to fully REORGANIZE on the teeth.

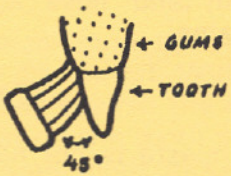
Bacteria must be ORGANIZED on the teeth in plaque to be HARMFUL.

BRUSHING

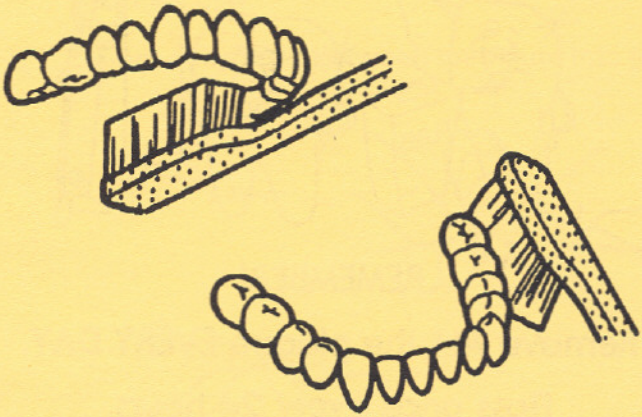
There are several methods of toothbrushing which can be effective. The following method is most frequently recommended by dentists.

1. Use a toothbrush with SOFT BRISTLES. (Hard bristles can damage the teeth and gums and do not clean as well as soft.)

2. Place the brush at a 45° angle where the teeth meet the gums, press firmly, and gently wiggle or rock the brush in a short back-and-forth or circular motion.



3. Brush all surfaces of the teeth — tongue-side and cheek-side. Give special attention to the inside of the front teeth.



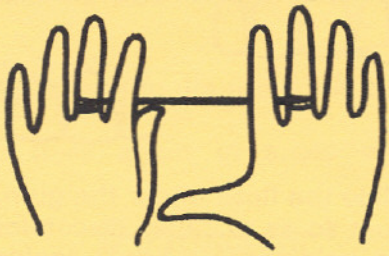
4. Brush the chewing surfaces with short back-and-forth strokes.

5. Brush the tongue. Plaque on the tongue can cause bad breath.

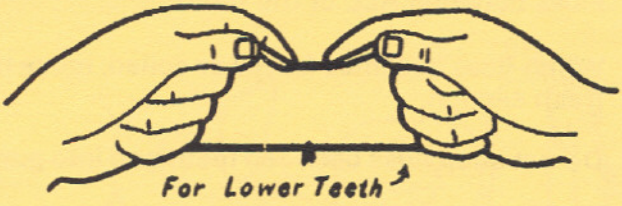
Plaque must be removed from ALL tooth surfaces. The toothbrush will clean three surfaces of the teeth; DENTAL FLOSS is necessary to clean the fourth area BETWEEN the teeth.

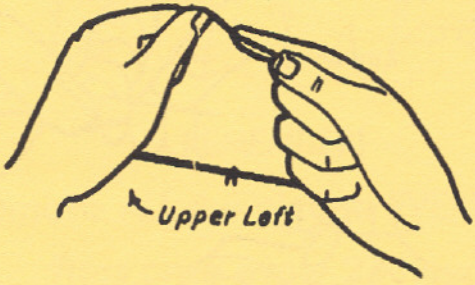
FLOSSING

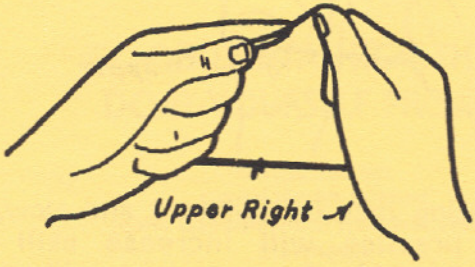
Cut off a piece of floss 18-20 inches long. Pinch the end of the floss between the left thumb and the base of the left middle finger. Wrap the floss around the finger several times and repeat this procedure on the right hand, until the two hands are a thumb length apart.



OR — cut off a piece of floss 12 inches long. Tie the ends together to form a loop about the size of an orange. If the loop is too large, wrap the floss around the little fingers to make it smaller.







To control the floss, the fingers should be close together. (about ½ inch apart)

1. Insert floss between the teeth. If teeth are tight together, carefully work back-and-forth to enter the area to be cleaned.

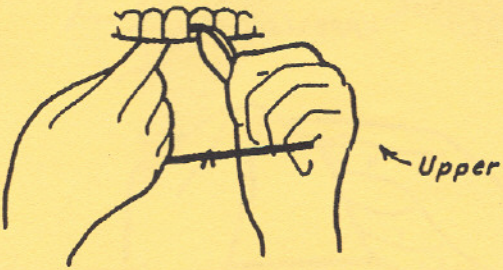
2. Curve the floss around the tooth to be cleaned . . .

and slide the floss under the gum, but not into the gum so as to cause discomfort. With both fingers holding floss firmly against the tooth, move floss up and down on the tooth several times. Repeat on the adjacent tooth until it too is clean (floss squeaks on a clean tooth).

3. Floss between ALL of the teeth.

4. When floss becomes frayed or soiled, move to a fresh section.

5. Do not snap floss between teeth and into gums.



At first flossing may be awkward and slow, but continued practice will increase skill and effectiveness. Any bleeding or soreness will subside as gums become healthy.

After brushing and flossing, rinse vigorously with water.

HAVE YOU REMOVED ALL OF THE PLAQUE?

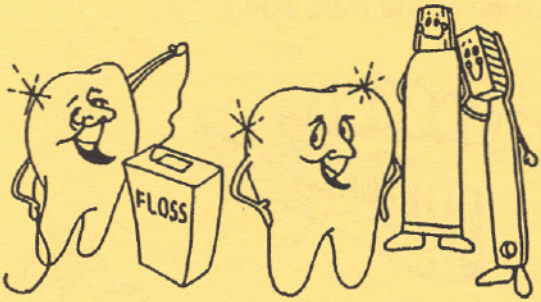
To check the effectiveness of your cleaning technique, use a DISCLOSING TABLET or rinse with red food coloring dissolved in a small amount of water.

Any plaque present on the teeth will turn red.

Brush and floss again in areas where plaque remains.

TOOTHPASTE

Toothpaste is not necessary to clean the teeth. A fluoride toothpaste, which has the American Dental Association seal and statement, can help to prevent cavities.



REMEMBER!

Remove ALL the plaque EVERY DAY.

Floss once every 24 hours.

GOOD DENTAL HEALTH IS A DO-IT-YOURSELF PROJECT!

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