



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Floss to protect teeth from sweets this holiday season

Delta Dental of Illinois stresses the importance of flossing for good oral health

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (November 18, 2013) – The holidays bring a lot of cheer and also a lot of sugary sweets, making it an ideal time to start a habit that you and your family may neglect: flossing. Although flossing is as important as brushing for good oral health, many people leave the habit out of their daily routine.

“Flossing is critical for removing plaque and bacteria that cause tooth decay and gum disease from areas between teeth where a toothbrush can’t reach. Truthfully, the bacteria in between your teeth can cause as much, if not more damage, than the plaque and bacteria on the front and back of your teeth,” said Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. “If parents aren’t flossing, their children won’t learn how important this habit is for maintaining a healthy mouth.”

In fact, only 49 percent of adults floss daily and 10 percent never floss.¹ And, even though it’s important for children to begin flossing once they have two teeth that touch, only 19 percent of Illinois parents report their children floss daily, and 44 percent say their children never floss, according to a Delta Dental of Illinois survey.² It’s recommended that parents help with flossing until age 10 or when children demonstrate they can do a good job on their own.

According to the American Academy of Periodontology, using floss daily results in less bacteria and less gingivitis than brushing alone.³ “Keep in mind that plaque is always forming on your teeth and contributes to tooth decay, gingivitis, periodontal disease, and eventually tooth loss. Flossing daily is the best way to remove plaque from hard-to-reach areas, but four or five times a week is better than never,” said Dr. Spadoni.

How to floss

Here are steps to help floss your teeth properly:

- After wrapping a strand of floss around both index fingers (or whichever pair feels best), hold the floss tightly between the thumbs and index fingers.
- Insert the floss between each pair of teeth by sawing gently back and forth with downward pressure until it pops below where the teeth contact each other. Pull the floss tight against the side of one tooth and rub the floss gently up and down the side of the tooth, then do the same to the tooth on the other side of the space.

- Move on to the next pair of teeth and repeat the process. Try to keep the floss tight against the side of each tooth and move it up and down, not back and forth. Remember to reach the back side of the last tooth in each corner of the mouth.⁴

“People are usually tempted with sugary foods during the holidays. Eating foods that are high in sugar, without proper oral care, can result in tooth decay and cavities,” Dr. Spadoni said. “While brushing is effective in cleaning tooth surfaces, the bristles cannot adequately clean between the teeth. Flossing will help remove food from those hard-to-reach areas.”

About Delta Dental of Illinois

Delta Dental of Illinois (DDIL) is a not-for-profit dental service corporation that provides dental benefit programs to individuals and more than 5,000 employee groups throughout Illinois. DDIL covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members in these groups nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.

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¹The Public Speaks Up on Oral Health Care. ADA and Crest/Oral-B survey. <http://www.crest.com/ada-webcast/surveyfindings.pdf>

²Morpace Inc. conducted the 2013 Delta Dental of Illinois Children’s Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted statewide via the Internet with 151 primary caregivers of children from birth to age 11. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of error is ±3.2 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

³American Academy of Periodontology. <http://www.perio.org/consumer/flossing08>

⁴How to Floss. American Dental Association. http://www.ada.org/sections/publicResources/pdfs/watch_materials_floss.pdf.