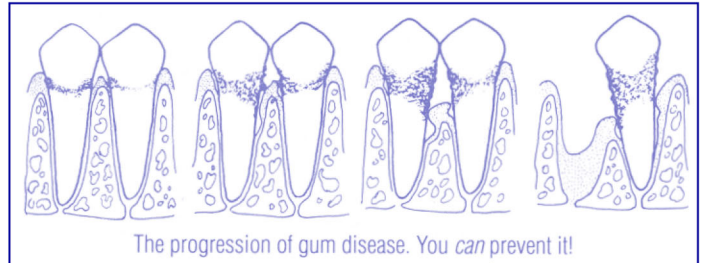# PLAQUE:◆

What it is and how to get rid of it

People used to think that as you got older you naturally lost your teeth. We now know that's not true. By following easy steps for keeping your teeth and gums healthy— plus seeing your dentist regularly—you can have your teeth for a lifetime!

The progression of gum disease. You *can* prevent it!

Brush

Plaque: What is it?

Plaque is a clear, thin, sticky film of bacteria (germs) that live on teeth and gums.

Plaque may cause:

- Tooth decay
- Gum disease

Red, puffy or bleeding gums can be the first signs of gum disease. If gum disease is not treated, the tissues holding the teeth in place are destroyed and the teeth are eventually lost.

Dental plaque is difficult to see unless it's stained. You can stain plaque by chewing red "disclosing tablets," found at grocery stores and drug stores, or by using a cotton swab to smear green food coloring on your teeth. The red or green color left on the teeth will show you where there is still plaque—and where you have to brush again to remove it.

Floss

Stain and examine your teeth regularly to make sure you are removing all plaque.

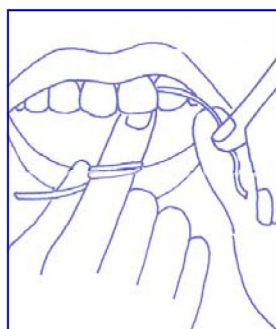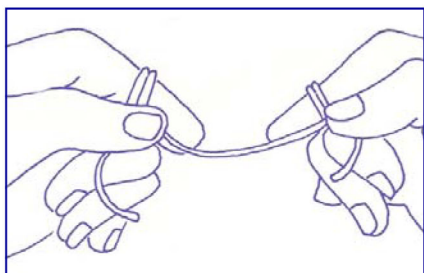Ask your dentist or dental hygienist if your plaque removal techniques are o.k.
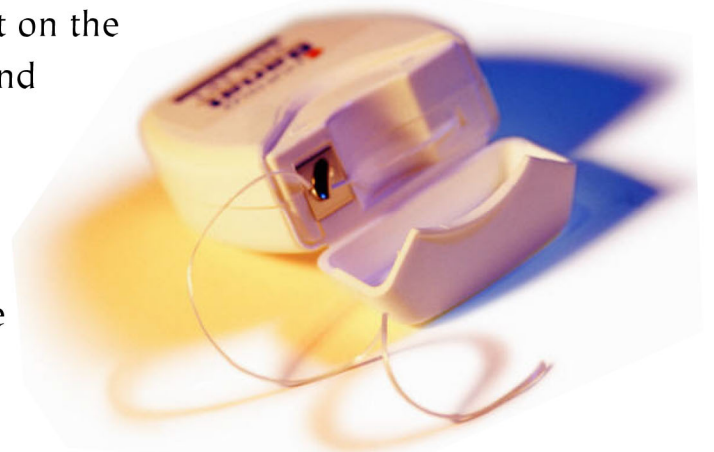
How to fight plaque and prevent disease of the teeth and gums
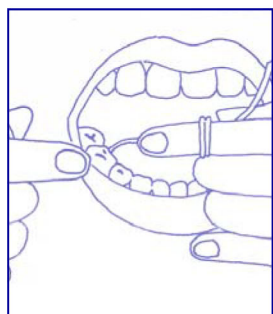
Step One — Floss

Use floss to remove germs and food particles between teeth. Rinse.

Holding floss.

Using floss between upper teeth.

Using floss between lower teeth.

NOTE! Ease the floss into place *gently*. *Do not 'snap' it into place*—this could harm your gums.

Step Two — Brush Teeth

Use any tooth brushing method that is comfortable, but **do not scrub** hard back and forth. Small circular motions and short back and forth motions work well. Rinse.

To prevent decay, it's what's on the toothbrush that counts. Use fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride is what protects teeth from decay.
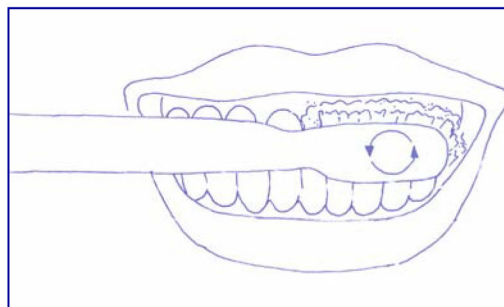
Brush the tongue for a fresh feeling! Rinse again.

Remember: Food particles, especially sweets, provide nutrients for the germs that cause tooth decay, as well as those that cause gum disease. That's why it is important to remove all food particles, as well as plaque, from teeth. Remove plaque at least once a day—twice a day is better! IF you only brush and floss once daily, do it before going to bed.

Brush ~ Floss ~ Brush

SIPH | **Southeastern Idaho Public Health**

www.siphidaho.org