



Laurelyn Higgins | Smile Dental

add years to your life and life to your years

When it comes to good health, flossing ranks right up there with taking your vitamins and quitting smoking.

People are living longer today because we've done a pretty good job of caring for ourselves, maintaining optimum health, preventing illness and disease, and extending life. Many men and women in their 60s, 70s and 80s are returning to study, rejoining the workforce, travelling extensively and contributing to the community. The secret is to enjoy good health as you age – to add life to the years, and not just years to the life.

You may be surprised to learn that flossing your teeth ranks right up there with good nutrition, taking your vitamins, quitting smoking and watching your cholesterol and blood pressure as among the top things to do to increase your longevity and health. In fact, some doctors believe flossing your teeth daily plays such a major part in preventing illness and disease prevention that it can add around six years to your life.

So what makes flossing so important? Well, flossing helps prevent gum disease, which is a major risk factor for a wide range of ailments, including heart attack, stroke, diabetes, respiratory disease and osteoporosis.

To prevent gum disease, follow these flossing and oral hygiene tips:

- Floss every day. The correct way to floss is to clean gently and thoroughly between your teeth and under the gums to remove plaque germs and toxins.
- Brush smart, not hard, and don't rush. Use a power toothbrush that reaches every crevice where plaque and food hide. Change the brush head regularly and practise good toothbrush hygiene.



- Brush using a toothpaste with fluoride. Spit thoroughly, but don't rinse – this will give you a mini-fluoride treatment every time you brush.
- Eat smart – don't snack all day.
- Don't smoke. It's a major risk factor for gum disease.
- If you're prone to clenching or grinding your teeth, wear a night splint to prevent unnecessary wear and tear on the teeth, gums and bone structure.
- Drink lots of water. Aim for eight to ten glasses a day.
- Watch for signs of gum disease, such as inflamed or bleeding gums. If you have any concerns, see your dentist or hygienist for a comprehensive examination, health history update, hygiene treatment and oral health education.

Following these simple oral hygiene tips will help prevent gum disease and keep you smiling for many years to come ;)

Material supplied by Smile Dental's Laurelyn Higgins, one of Australia's most respected dental hygienists.

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