

Toothbrushing and Flossing

by
Anna Vorfolomieiva

New York City College of Technology

Department of Dental Hygiene

DEN 1100L Preclinic, Section OL20

Spring 2021

Instructor: Prof. Susan Davide

05.02.2021

Part 1: Understanding Gingivitis and Periodontitis

Gingivitis is a fairly common disease among Americans. 3 out of 4 people have it to some extent. Gingivitis is caused by the growth of bacteria in plaque around the gum line due to the lack or insufficient brushing or flossing. The bacteria produce toxins that cause redness and swelling of the gingiva, bleeding, and bad breath. In some cases, gingiva can be painful. In addition to insufficient teeth brushing, factors that affect the development of gingivitis can be tobacco smoking, stress, hormonal changes in the body as a result of pregnancy or adolescence, poor nutrition, certain medications and chronic diseases. Gingivitis is the first step to the more serious periodontal disease that causes pockets, gum recession and tooth loss.

As scary as it may seem, the difference between gingivitis and periodontitis is that gingivitis is a reversible disease. After the start of regular brushing and flossing, the gingiva returns to a healthy state after 3 to 5 days. Therefore, my recommendations for future patients in the fight against gingivitis will be:

- do not give up and remember that this disease is reversible;
- -start brushing their teeth regularly at least twice a day for 2 minutes;
- use a soft bristled toothbrush and change it every 2 - 3 months;
- at least once a day use dental floss;
- use special anti-gingival toothpastes and mouthwashes;

- examine their gingiva regularly with a mirror and if they cannot overcome gingivitis do not give up and contact their dentist or hygienist to correct mistakes in oral care.

Part 2: Toothbrushing (TB) Methods and Types

I will discuss with the patient effective brushing techniques that will allow the removal of plaque biofilm without damaging soft and hard oral tissues. I would also talk about toothbrush grasp and the need to approach the brushing process systematically for complete coverage of tooth surfaces (Boyd et al.). I will explain why they should divide the mouth into quarters during the brushing process and ensure that each placement overlaps the last one. The tips that I can give to the patient on caring for their toothbrushing include ensuring that they brush their teeth at least twice per day and replace their toothbrush regularly (Boyd et al.). I would also encourage them to use a toothbrush with extra soft or soft bristles and dip it in hot water before use. I would discuss with them the need to brush the tongue.

When a toothbrush is not in use, it should be placed in the open air. Toothbrushes should not be placed in closed containers to prevent bacterial growth (Boyd et al.) The toothbrush needs to be changed every 3-4 months. The replacement should be done sooner in case the bristles are worn at the edge (Dudala). A toothbrush needs to be changed because a worn one does not clean teeth properly.

The difference between manual and power toothbrushes is that manual brushes are less expensive than power ones and provide more choice in various features. These features include color, ergonomic design, and bristle style (Sinclair). The pros of manual toothbrushes are that they are affordable and portable. These brushes are portable since they do not use batteries hence

do not need charging (Bradley). Another pro for manual toothbrushes is that they are comfortable due to their molded handles (Sinclair). The con of manual toothbrushes is that their effectiveness in reducing dental plaque is limited. The pros of electric toothbrushes are that they are highly effective in cleaning, help some patient groups, and provide more choice for brush heads that match each person's needs (Bradley). The con of electric toothbrushes is that their action and vibration are not well tolerated in some patients. One tip that I can provide my patients with electric toothbrushes is to purchase those that track brushing, offer feedback, and coach them on better brushing methods. I would also encourage them to choose a brush whose head design meets their needs.

Part 3: Flossing Methods

Most of the existing sources state that a New Orleans dentist invented dental floss in 1815 when he encouraged his patients to clean between teeth using a thin silk thread. The dentist was Dr. Levi Spear Parmly. The idea was adopted by a company that started selling unwaxed silk dental flosses (*The History of Dental Floss*). Flossing is a crucial part of taking care of gums and teeth since it removes plaque that can cause gum disease or cavities in areas that a toothbrush cannot reach.

Flossing requires the distal and proximal surfaces of teeth to be cleaned. It is necessary to guide the floss through each area to prevent it from snapping and getting to gingival tissue. The spool flossing method requires a piece of floss to be cut (18-20 inches) and each side wrapped around the middle finger (University of Rochester Medical Center). The floss is then moved between the teeth using thumbs and index fingers in an up and down pattern, ensuring that the

floss goes below the gum line. The floss should be bend to create C on the tooth's side. The loop method involves cutting an 18-inch long floss and tying it to form a circle. All the fingers are then placed within the loop, but the thumbs are left out (University of Rochester Medical Center). The floss is guided through the lower teeth by index fingers and through the upper teeth by thumbs. In the loop method, it is also necessary to reach the gum line and form a C on the tooth's side by bending the floss.

Part 4: Patient Care

If a 13-year old teenager approached me and told me that they brush their teeth once a day, I would encourage them to increase their brushing frequency twice a day. I would explain to them the need to maintain a high level of dental hygiene. If they told me about not having flossed before getting braces, I would discuss an approach that they should use for flossing even when they have the orthodontic appliances. I would talk to them about the floss threader that removes debris and biofilm around orthodontic appliances (Boyd et al.). The threader holds the regular floss and helps maintain oral hygiene.

I would approach the 28-year-old patient and explain to them why he/she need to choose a toothbrush that will enable them to brush their teeth better. I would advise using a soft-bristle toothbrush recommended by American Dental Association (Boyd et al.). I would explain to the patient that gingival recession in most cases occurs when an individual fails to use a soft toothbrush. I would also touch on other factors that can lead to recession, including toothbrushing and other anatomical features, and provide an individualized recommendation. I would advise the patient to floss regularly to get rid of plaque between their teeth. I would

encourage them to control the floss to prevent it from getting to the gingival tissue or use power floss.

Part 5: Reflection writing prompts.

After completing this assignment, I can clearly understand how I will motivate and teach my patients correct tooth brushing technique, explain to them correct toothbrush storage, and why a power toothbrush is more beneficial for them than a manual toothbrush. Also, I learned completely new things about flossing. I learned that this instrument for interdental cleaning was discovered many years ago and this is the most useful and powerful thing to prevent interdental caries and interdental gingivitis. I started using floss by myself and I will definitely recommend it to my future patients. Moreover, after starting this assignment I checked my husband and kids for correct toothbrushing technique and realized that none of them are using toothbrushes correctly or for the needed amount of time. After a little conversation with them and demonstrating correct strokes, the amount of biofilm on their teeth was reduced, but we are still working on mastering brushing.

This assignment added more confidence to me to talk about the importance of flossing and correct usage of toothbrushes with my perspective patients. This is the most useful knowledge as every one of us should brush and floss our teeth at least twice a day. But the main point is to do it correctly, for more efficiency, and it pleased to know that now I can help in mastering these skills.

Works Cited

- Bradley, Natalie. "Manual vs Power - Which Toothbrush Is Best? It Depends..." *Colgate® Professional*, Dec. 2020, www.colgateprofessional.com/students-faculty/student-resources/manual-vs-power-which-toothbrush-is-best-it-depends.
- Boyd, Linda, et al. *Wilkins Clinical Practice of the Dental Hygienist*. 13th ed., Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2021.
- Dudala, Lakshmi. "Brushing Techniques." *SlideShare*, 10 Jan. 2017, www.slideshare.net/lakshmi01071994/brushing-techniques-70870057.
- Sinclair, Louise. "Getting the Most out of a Manual Toothbrush." *Colgate® Professional*, Dec. 2020, www.colgateprofessional.com/students-faculty/student-resources/get-the-most-out-of-manual-toothbrushing.
- "The History of Dental Floss." *Oral*, Oral-B.com, 2021, oralb.com/en-us/oral-health/dental-floss-history/.
- University of Rochester Medical Center. "Flossing and Children." *Flossing and Children - Health Encyclopedia - University of Rochester Medical Center*, 2021, www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?contenttypeid=90&contentid=P01852.