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## Episode 2: Is flossing your teeth really necessary?\_002

Is flossing your teeth really necessary. Stay tuned to find out on this old tooth.

Hello everyone. You are listening to episode number two of this old tooth, a podcast devoted to providing you with truthful agenda free information about how you can get and keep a beautiful healthy smile forever. I am your host, Dr Lisa Germain. Today we will be discussing whether flossing your teeth is really necessary and I know many of you out there are hoping that at the conclusion of this show that I tell you that it is not, but I'm going to give you a little spoiler alert here. Sometimes flossing your teeth can be a useless waste of time, but I'll get to that later. First, let me tell you a story. And of course in the story, the name of the patient has been changed about a month ago. My patient, Melissa, came to see me. I could not help but notice how wonderful she looked. Now, Melissa had always taken really good care of herself, but on that particular day she looked amazing.

So I said, Mel, you really look fantastic. What have you been doing? So she told me that she had just come from hosting a charity luncheon. Well, we chatted for a few minutes and then I asked her why she had come to see me and she told me that her teeth had become a bit more sensitive to cold, than normal, but otherwise she could only really describe what she was feeling is a very vague sensation, not really pain, just more of an awareness of her teeth. I reclined her back in the chair a little bit and asked her to open her mouth and when she did, I was completely bowled over. Thank goodness the wheels on my stool were locked in place because I might have fallen off of my chair. Her gums were puffy and swollen and she had some green stuff step between her teeth as well as some white mush and a bit of red goo.

So Mel, I asked casually, did you serve your famous crab salad at your luncheon today? So she looked up at me a bit perplexed and said, um, that's what I served at yesterday's event. I took a deep breath and turned around and I put on a second face mask. Then I probed around very lightly around her teeth and noticed that her gums began to bleed immediately. Mel, have you noticed that your gums are bleeding I asked her and she said, well, isn't it normal for your gums to bleed when you brush your teeth I wanted to say, is it normal for your hands to bleed when you wash them... I wanted to say, is it normal for anywhere

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else on your body to bleed when you clean it? No. I said firmly, it is not normal for your gums to bleed when you brush and floss your teeth.

And then she said, oh, I don't floss anymore. I stopped flossing when I read an article in the New York Times that said that there was no research that proved that it was really something that would make a difference. Now, this was a patient who was ordinarily fastidious about her health and hygiene, and yet she smelled like a buffalo that had been eating rotten eggs, and I know she would have been horrified if I told her that. So finding no other problems with her teeth, I suggested she get back into her regular routine of brushing twice a day and flossing once a day. I also told her that the vague sensation that she was having as well as the increased awareness to cold could be coming from the fact that her gums were not as healthy as they used to be. She agreed to start flossing again, and I scheduled her to come back in six weeks to check and make sure that she was making some progress.

That night, I went home and immediately found the New York Times article that Mel had referred to. Okay, so true confessions. My name is Lisa and I am a "Floss-a-holic. I have dental floss in my car, in every purse, in every pocket and in every drawer in my house. So I was shocked to see that indeed, the article stated that there is no scientific proof that flossing prevents tooth decay or gum disease. Wow. 40 plus years of being a dentist and was it really true that the essence of my belief system and the dogma that is ingrained in my brain could really be a lie? Well, I read the article again and I also went a little bit deeper into it and found the references that they use. The article did be grudgingly mentioned that your gums are apt to bleed less if you flaws. Hmm.

But you know something sometimes you just can't believe everything you read even if it is on the internet or in the New York Times. So by going into the supporting articles, I am actually quite relieved to tell you that the reasons that the scientific data failed to show favorable results about flossing was that there really is not enough scientific data to state that as a fact. The studies done have not been done for long enough periods of time or in enough people. And in addition to that, some people are just better at flossing than others and therefore there was no way to control other factors that could have negatively impacted the results of these studies. But most importantly, what I'd like to tell you is that a lot of research that is done is based on observation and experience. This is called anecdotal or empirical evidence and so here is the truth.

When you brush your teeth alone, you are only cleaning about half of your tooth surfaces and the way I look at it is if crab meat Louie can get lodged in there and take up residence, so construct a streptococcus. There are 300 plus types of bacteria that are found in the mouth because let's not forget that it is the other end of our GI tracks directly connected to our stomach by what amounts to a very short tube. Now also think about this. We do not use scientific data to do a lot of things that we do. Sometimes we do things because they are just plain logical. For example, I have never seen scientific proof that

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washing my arm pits is necessary either, but based on my experience, I do it every time I shower. Okay. I know probably too much information, but I promise to entertain you too.

To be perfectly fair, flossing your teeth is one of the more challenging and technically difficult grooming habits. It is easy to just blow it off and run out the door after a quick brush and spit. You need to look in the mirror until you get the hang of it and it will hurt if you veer away from the tooth and get your gum instead. Plus if you are not used to doing it, your gums will bleed like crazy until you toughen them up a bit and if it snags under your fillings or breaks off and gets caught, it is definitely time to visit your dentist. What I can tell you is that once flossing becomes a habit, you are going to want to do it. If I don't floss, at least the recommended once a day, I feel like my teeth are wearing fuzzy little turtleneck sweaters.

It is often said that it takes 30 days for something to become a habit. I challenge everyone out there to try flossing for 30 days. You can do anything for 30 days and I can tell you how much more confident you will be that your breath is not offensive and how it will prevent all kinds of other dental problems. So why in the beginning of the show did I say flossing can be a huge waste of time? Because you need to do it correctly or it's a waste of time. So ask your dental hygienist or your dentist to show you how to floss properly. And it's normal to feel some discomfort when you first start as well. But don't give up with daily brushing and cleaning between your teeth. That discomfort should ease within a week or two. But if your pain persists, please see your dentist. Now, why should you believe me? Because if I teach you how to prevent dental disease, I am essentially putting myself out of business. I should be telling you to eat sticky candy, to pull out all your fillings and that sugar is great for your teeth. And brushing once a month is all you need. But my mission for this old tooth is to help you get and keep a beautiful healthy smile for life. And now for a fun fact!

There was a time when people were told that if they kissed a donkey, it would cure their toothache. Wow. You can't make this stuff up. On my next show, I'll be answering the question. Does a woman necessarily lose a tooth with every pregnancy?

You're not going to want to miss it. If you have any dental questions that you would like addressed on my show, go to my website@[www.dothisoldtooth.com](http://www.dothisoldtooth.com) and it would mean so much to me. If you subscribe to my podcast right now, I am going to let my next 250 subscribers download for free, my ebook, the ultimate guide, how to choose a dentist. Thank you for listening. I appreciate you more than you can imagine and remember, be true to your teeth or they will be false to you.

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