

To floss, or not to floss!

That is the real question. *by Dr. Susan Maples*

It's hard to believe that in 2016 we get a media blast AGAINST flossing your teeth. That message did not come from the AAP (American Association of Periodontics), a scientific organization, but rather from the AP (Associated Press), a news gathering organization. They seem to refute 25 studies that have shown flossing to be helpful in preventing oral disease.

In today's world we look to the evidence—the research—to determine whether our current beliefs hold true. Some of the research is old, some studies have too few participants to be considered valid, and some really do outpace our old belief systems. So, I wrote to the AP, inquiring about the studies they refuted, and at no surprise to me, I received no response.

Here's what we know: based on current and valid research. Gum disease is complicated. Our "host immune

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response" to the bug-layer that accumulates around the cuff of each tooth is different for each individual. A small percentage of adults who have good bugs and no other immune problems do pretty well in avoiding inflammation, even without the best home care. But truthfully, 80+% of adults have gum disease and most of those who remain healthy prevent inflammation by brushing and flossing. Ask any daily flosser if they'd ever stop flossing and they're grossed out at the idea!

One good thing that came from the AP article is it highlights the complicated nature of gum disease and inflammation. Host immune response

depends largely on environmental factors—not just flossing or getting your teeth professionally cleaned—smoking, diabetes, and other immune suppressing conditions (such as stress, cancer, obesity and genetics) all play a part. As a population we are sick, so it's no wonder so many of us have oral disease.

The bottom line is get flossing! Floss deeply—curving the floss in a c-shape around the tooth and hug it as you move it up and down as far as you can. And if you gums bleed, you have inflammation. Ask your dentist to help you with a plan to get healthy again and avoid the risks of tooth loss, stroke, heart attack, diabetes and erectile dysfunction.



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Dr. Susan Maples DDS and Team.

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