

[IMAGE]

Why Flossing Your Teeth Can Save Your Life

By Julie T. Chen, MD

When I was little, I have to admit to the fact that I didn't floss every day. But then again, I was a kid...what kid does what she or he is supposed to do every day?

But now that I'm older, I have learned about the importance of flossing daily. And why is it important, you may be asking?

We now think that periodontal health (health of your teeth and gums) can impact your risks for heart disease amongst others. This shouldn't come as a surprise considering everything in our body affects everything...meaning that our mouth and what's in it and the health status of it of course might impact and/or be a reflection of our body's overall health; just like even hair loss is reflection of our underlying health and skin diseases are a reflection of our health.

Flossing every day is very important. Even if you did it for just 60 seconds once a day...the point is to make it into a daily habit. Flossing isn't just to remove food between your teeth. Flossing allows you to help clean out the dental plaques which are bacterial ecosystems in your mouth. By keeping your dental plaque levels to a reasonable status, you can keep your gums healthy and prevent all the bleeding and soreness that many people use as an excuse not to floss.

flossing - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark When your gums swell and turn red and hurt or bleed, that's inflammation. For all those readers who regularly read my articles, you know that chronic inflammation in your body is not good for your health.

By flossing, you remove bacterial and encourage healthy teeth and gum status. If you think your teeth are too tightly spaced, you should try waxed dental floss or ask your dentist about what to do; but simply ignoring it is not the way to go.

The current recommendation for those people who are concerned about heart disease or strokes is for people to eat healthy, exercise, manage stress, and make sure to get adequate sleep. What's surprising to many of my patients in my integrative medicine clinic patients is that flossing is also one of those "must do's" for

heart health.

So, the next time you decide it's no big deal not to floss today, just remember that it can become a slippery slope when you start to skip flossing a few days per week...you just might stop doing it altogether just like if you skip the gym more and more often, many of my patients then just stop going. Make flossing a priority...if you think heart health is important...then the health of your teeth and gums are too.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

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