

DENTAL CARE



The Power of Flossing

Brushing twice a day is recommended by all of the major dental organizations, but if you're not flossing, you are missing out on an opportunity to optimize your oral healthcare.

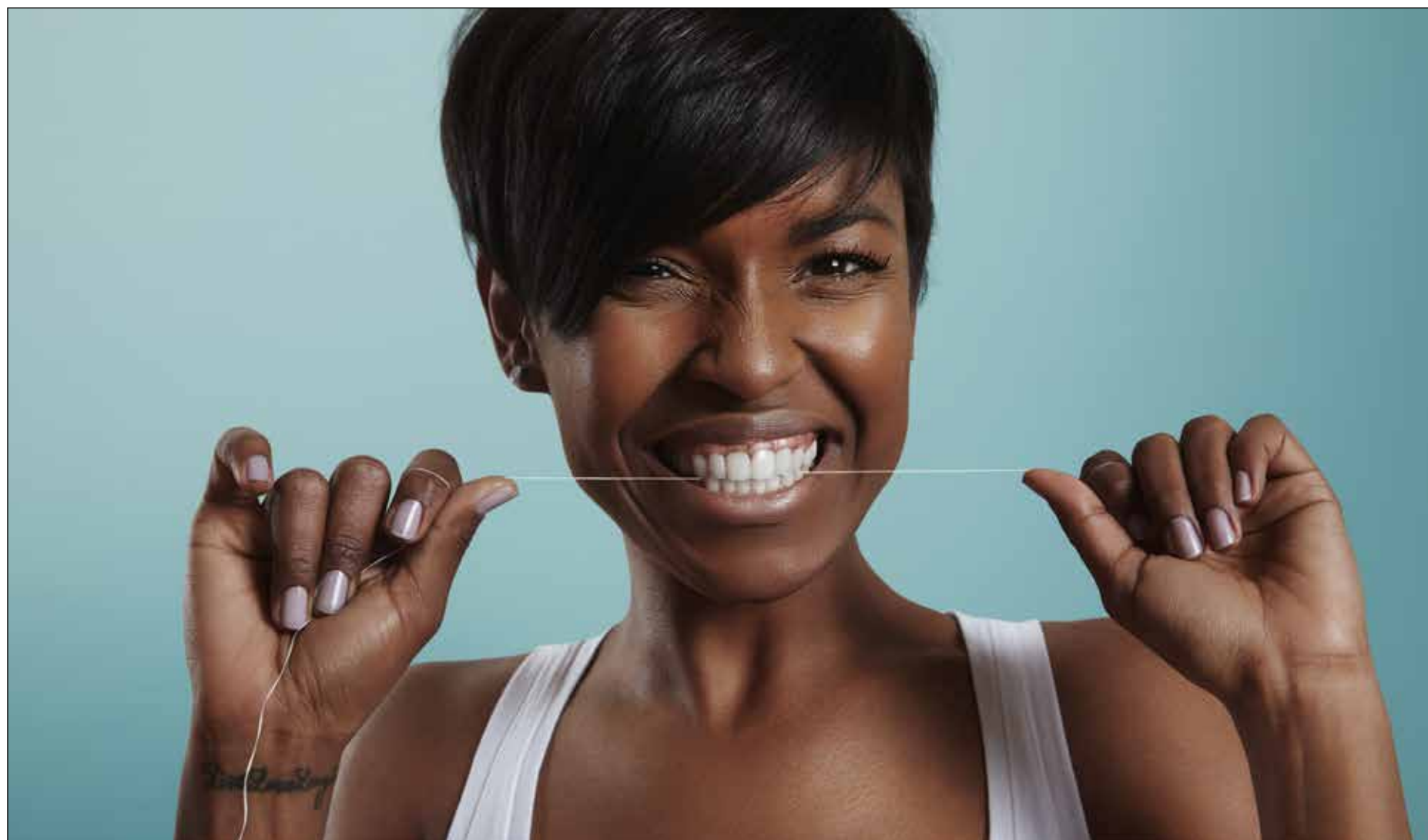
The American Dental Association urges people to floss at least once a day to help remove plaque from the areas between the teeth where the toothbrush simply cannot reach.

Flossing is important because it helps prevent gum disease and cavities. And according to the ADA, it doesn't matter if you floss before or after brushing — as long as you're doing it. A 2015 poll by MouthHealthy.org found that 53 percent of its readers said they brush before, while 47 percent said after.

The key is finding the time to floss. Bring some floss with you to work to take care of it during your lunch break. Wake up a few minutes early or stay awake a few minutes later to give your teeth some extra attention. With just a little effort, you can make a big difference in the present and future health of your teeth.

DON'T FORGET THE KIDS

As an adult, it's up to us to be great role models. Proper dental care is a behavior we can easily pass on to our children by teaching them the importance of taking care of their mouths. You should be flossing your child's teeth as soon as you see two teeth



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touching.

The ADA recommends parents flossing their children's teeth until they are about 10 years old. By this age, children have the dexterity to effectively floss by themselves.

Encourage your children to floss by reassuring them that the experience is not a painful one. Flossing should be done

in a firm yet gentle manner. If you're feeling pain while you're flossing, you're not doing it correctly.

HOW TO FLOSS

The ADA has found that only about half of Americans floss their teeth. Considering the ease of flossing, this number should be much higher. The process is sim-

ple and straightforward, as these tips from the ADA point out:

- Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind it around the middle fingers of each hand.
- Guide the floss between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion.
- When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth; gently slide it

into the space between the gum and the tooth.

- Bring the floss back toward the contact point between the teeth and move the floss up or down the other side.
- Hold the floss tightly against the tooth; gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up-and-down motions.

Overcome Your Fear

A ccording to the American Dental Association, an estimated 40 million Americans avoid the dentist because of fear and anxiety.

If you fall into this category, you can probably relate to your friends and neighbors who feel this way as their dentist appointment approaches on the calendar.

Why are people so fearful of dental visits? Many people associate pain or uncertainty when thinking about their dental experiences. It doesn't have to be this way. Your dental professionals are there to ensure your comfort and wellbeing.

Instead of treating a trip to the dentist as an inconvenience, think of it as the most effective way of making sure your teeth are as healthy as possible. If you let fear overtake your mental connection with the dentist, you may put off critical appointments or procedures. Doing so is a surefire way of opening the door for future dental health issues.

TALK ABOUT YOUR FEARS

Studies have proven that the most important factor in overcoming dental anxiety is good relationship with your dental professional and his or her staff. If you trust your dentist, you are more likely to feel at ease in the dentist's chair.

Open the lines of communication with your dentist to share how you're feeling. Be honest and frank by explaining why you are anxious. Dentists are trained in easing patient fears and delivering outstanding bedside manner.

If you feel like your dentist is lacking in any of these areas, it's time to search for a new dentist.



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WHAT TO DO AT THE DENTIST

There are also things you can do when the time comes to walk through your dentist's doors. Follow these tips from Delta Dental:

- Focus on breathing regularly, deeply and slowly during dental procedures. This will help facilitate the flow of oxygen throughout your body and decrease any feelings of panic.

- Ask your dentist if you're allowed to wear earbuds to listen to your favorite band or podcast during your visit. Doing so can serve as a welcome distraction from any sounds of the dentist's office that make you feel uncomfortable.

- Avoid caffeine before a dental appointment. Instead, eat high-protein foods that produce a calming effect.

- Try to choose a time for your dental visit when you're not under a time crunch. This means avoiding tight windows such as lunch breaks or before work.

- If you are looking for a dentist, ask friends and relatives for their experiences and recommendations. A good review from a trusted source can start you off on the right foot.

Diet and Tooth Decay

The foods you eat and the beverages you drink play a major role in the overall health of your teeth and gums.

Everything from the form of the food to the frequency of which you eat certain foods can make a big difference.

Here are some other factors to consider when choosing foods, provided by the American Dental Association, that can determine the overall level of your oral health: the nutritional makeup of the food; the combination of the foods you eat and the order in which you eat them; and medical conditions you may have, such as gastrointestinal reflux and eating disorders, which can increase risk of cavities and weaken teeth.

SOURCES OF ADDED SUGAR

Everyone knows sugar is bad for your teeth. You should limit added sugars in your diet by reading food labels.

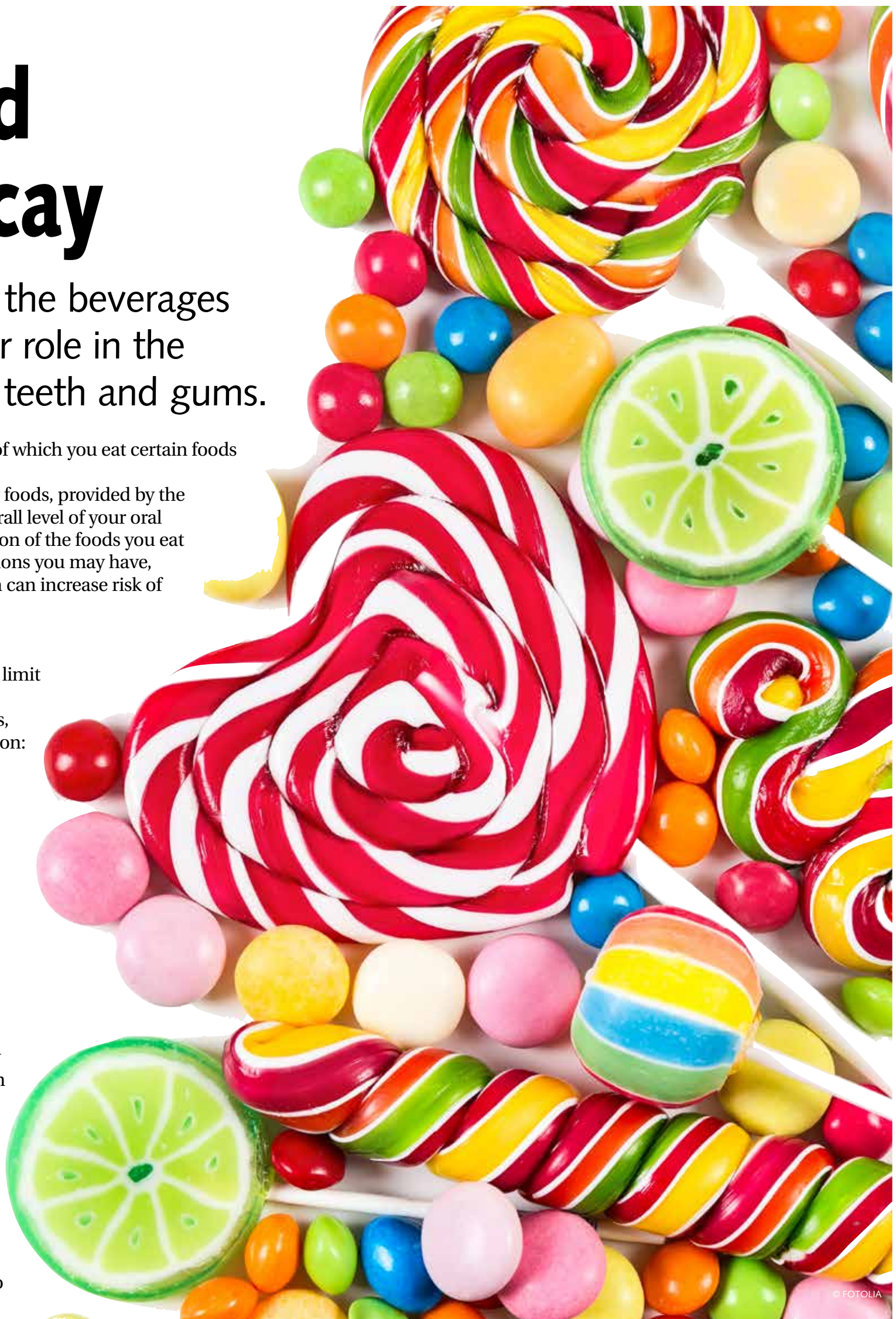
The top sources of added sugar in the diet are as follows, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks	35.7%
Grain-based desserts (cakes, pies)	12.9%
Fruit drinks	10.5%
Dairy-based desserts (ice cream)	6.5%
Candy	6.1%
Ready-to-eat cereals	3.8%
Sugars and honey	3.5%
Tea (sweetened)	3.5%
Yeast breads	2.1%
All other foods	15.4%

Foods such as lollipops, mints, taffy, caramel, cookies, cakes and muffins are the enemies of your teeth. Not only do they offer no nutritional value, but the type of sugars in them can adhere to your teeth.

According to the CDC, the bacteria in your mouth feed off these sugars and release acids, causing teeth to decay.

If sugary foods are a large part of your diet, it's time to rethink what you're putting into your body. Start by cutting back slowly and eventually eliminating them as you train yourself to opt for healthier snacks instead. This is a process, but one you can execute if you stay committed to dental care excellence.



What types of service you need will be determined by how damaged your teeth or gums are.

Seeing a Periodontist

If you have undergone any treatment for advanced gum disease, you probably have consulted with a periodontist. This type of dentist specializes in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of periodontal disease.



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Periodontists also are experts in the placement of dental implants, treatment of oral inflammation and execution of cosmetic periodontal procedures.

WHAT IS PERIODONTITIS?

Untreated gingivitis can advance to periodontitis as plaque spreads and grows below the gum line. Toxins produced by the bacteria in plaque irritate the gums and stimulate a chronic inflammatory response. This leads to the gradual deterioration of the bones that support the teeth.

Other impacts include gums separating from the teeth and forming pockets that become infected. These pockets can deepen and destroy even more gum tissue and bones. Eventually the teeth can become loose and may have to be removed.

WHAT PERIODONTISTS DO

Periodontists often treat more problematic cases, sometimes involving severe gum disease or complicated medical backgrounds. Periodontists offer a wide range of treatments, such as scaling and root planing or root surface debride-

ment.

Severe gum problems can be treated using a range of surgical procedures. What types of service you need will be determined by how damaged your teeth or gums are. Consult with your dental professionals to put together a treatment plan.

FORMS OF PERIODONTITIS

There are many forms of periodontitis. Here are a few, according to the American Academy of Periodontology:

- **Aggressive periodontitis** occurs

in patients who are otherwise clinically healthy. Common features include rapid attachment loss and bone destruction.

- Chronic periodontitis results in inflammation within the supporting tissues of the teeth, progressive attachment and bone loss. This is the most frequently occurring form of periodontitis.

- Periodontitis as a manifestation of systemic diseases often begins at a young age. Systemic conditions such as heart disease, respiratory disease and diabetes are associated with this form of periodontitis.