



August 25, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Flossing Follow-up

I've written the message for over 16 years and for the past 10 years, it's been about health, but I never know what kind of response I'm going to get about what I write. Flossing and "dangerous supplement ingredients" really brought out some great questions. I'll cover them in the next two messages.

Today, flossing. Many readers and listeners thanked me for addressing the issue and challenging the AP report. We think of teeth as being shaped like a blade, but most are closer to square at the gumline. That's a lot of surface area between teeth that your toothbrush isn't going to reach effectively; how are you going to keep those areas clean if you don't floss?

One retired dentist recommended using floss picks that can be used anywhere; they're great at immediately getting out food that's stuck between teeth. Paula uses them regularly in addition to flossing; she says that when you get accustomed to **not** having food between your teeth, it drives you crazy when you do.

Someone asked about water piks for water flossing. The research is just as sparse as for thread flossing. I would say that as long as your dental check-ups continue to be fine, use your water pik.



I have no research to support this, but it just seems something mechanical such as floss would clean more thoroughly. I know water jets can cut steel, but how strong would the water stream be from a pik? Some research shows more damage from water piks but also shows better cleaning.

One of Paula's dental implants fits very tightly to her gumline, making a perfect spot for bacteria to grow. Our dentist recommended using the AirFloss Ultra with BreathRx in that area; since adding that to her nightly routine (she still flosses with regular floss), she's had no problems. If you really, really hate flossing with floss, maybe this would be a good alternative for you.

Finally a long-time reader and friend asked about whether the original research was about plaque, not preventing gum disease. The problem is that the AP didn't clarify anything. Cavities, plaque, and periodontal disease are not all exactly the same issue although probably related due to bacterial growth. I'll keep my eye on the research but for now, flossing every day is still a part of my daily routine. I hope it's part of yours as well.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

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