



## Tooth Talk

by Mary Ellen Volansky, RDH, MS

### Flossing is Yucky, Messy, and ...

Do you like brushing your teeth? How about flossing? Messy? Boring? You find them both fun and wish you could brush and floss more often?

One night not too long ago, I ran out of the bathroom ready to slip into bed for the mindless bliss of sleep and dreaming. Then I realized I hadn't flossed! What to do? Who would know?

For a short moment, I nearly left the floss on the shelf and proceeded toward my goal. Then my greatest motivator flashed into my mind and I walked back into the bathroom.

Knowing the reasons for doing something, how beneficial it is for us, is not always enough. Understanding that floss is the toothbrush for between our teeth can help. Knowing that floss will remove the bacteria that cause cavities and gum disease might move us along.

Knowledge alone would work better if it produced an immediate result. If brushing and flossing produced a visible change, say like washing our hands after digging in the garden, changing the oil in our car, or baking bread.

If we floss after not flossing for a long time, there usually is a visible change – the gums bleed and are sore. Seeing the bleeding unfortunately stops people from flossing. They stop flossing to stop the bleeding.

Here comes more knowledge: The gums bleed specifically because they have not been flossed – because they are infected. They will stop bleeding in 3-4 days if gentle flossing is continued. The gums will heal.

Now don't get me wrong – I have been known to not floss, which is why I floss twice a day. Twice-a-day flossing gives me a sense that it's OK to slack off once in a while. We do tell you to floss just once a day.

Sometimes I floss mid-day if I know I will be too tired that night. Maybe I've a party to attend or a dinner to cook for friends. But what else would a hygienist do, you say?

Can you believe I dislike flossing as much as you? Flossing is definitely boring. Gosh, fingers get yucky wet and if I've had garlic – oops, sorry, I won't go there.

Gagging is no fun either. If there is anything I work hard at, it's to prevent gagging. A tip for reducing the possibility of gagging – swallow before sticking your fingers in your mouth.

Be sure to breathe. Holding your breath is less fun than flossing. But breathe through your nose. Moving my lower jaw to the side, I am working on relaxing face muscles to make room for my stubby fingers. Guys, you aren't the only ones. Female or male, we all can find reasons to not floss.

When you come in next time, ask me about putting your floss in a loop. With a loop there is no need to wrap the floss around your fingers. Fingers are so easy to trip over.

Also, there are many types of floss holders. We can give you a sample when you come in. Or check out the oral health section at BiMart, Fred Meyer, or Wal-Mart.

My favorite floss has flavor – mint, berry, and cinnamon. The newest flavored floss has toothpaste on it. The taste from putting it between all your teeth is refreshing. And the flavor helps us feel as if flossing actually does something. Look for "cleanpaste," a Reach product by Johnson & Johnson.

Floss comes in colors: white, red, blue, green, and black. It can be made of nylon, cotton, and one is made of Gor-tex. Some flosses are waxed, some are lightly waxed, others are unwaxed.

Maybe you like thin or thick, maybe woven floss is your style? Another floss that is woven green and white has fluoride on it. It seems even industry is interested in us flossing our teeth ... or helping us and making a buck.

OK, what is my biggest motivator? You are. As a professional who likes what she does and who wants you to like taking care of your teeth, I feel bound to do as I say to do.

Each time I am tempted to not floss, which is more often than I want to admit, I am reminded of the many many times I have told you to floss. So thank you for keeping me honest as a dental professional. You have contributed to my overall good health.

**Kids**, do you want some fun Web page activities? Do you like colorful tasks, word games, and puzzles? Check out the Web sites below:

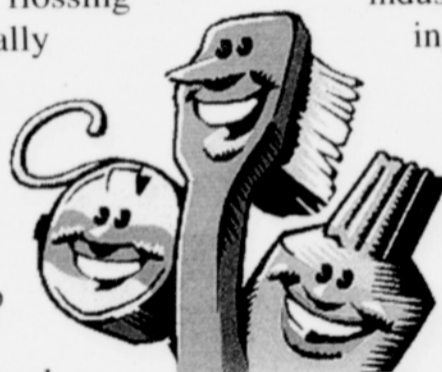
#### Tom's (Natural Care) of Maine

- A) This link has an oral health quiz to complete.  
[www.tomsomaine.com/toms/community/dhfa2006/oral\\_health/quiz.asp](http://www.tomsomaine.com/toms/community/dhfa2006/oral_health/quiz.asp)
- B) This link has a coloring book to download or just print.  
[www.tomsomaine.com/toms/community/dhfa2006/kids/default.asp](http://www.tomsomaine.com/toms/community/dhfa2006/kids/default.asp)

#### The University of Manchester

- A) This link has interactive activities for children.  
[www.childrensuniversity.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.childrensuniversity.manchester.ac.uk)

This link has activities that can be done at home or in the classroom, downloadable activities too:  
[www.teachingheart.net/teeth.html](http://www.teachingheart.net/teeth.html)



## New Optometrist Joins Clinic

We have a new optometrist on staff at the Siletz Clinic, Dr. Sky Schroeder.

Now is the perfect time to schedule your eye exams. It's especially important to have our diabetic and elderly patients get in for their regular annual checkups.

You can schedule an appointment with either Dr. Rick Letherer on Mondays or Dr. Schroeder on Thursdays. Feel free to call the clinic today at 541-444-1030 or 1-800-648-0449 to schedule your exam.

## Diabetes and the New Year

When setting your New Year's resolutions, remember that goals should be measurable and easy to meet. If they cannot be met, rewrite the goals to make them attainable rather than give up.



### Six Healthy Diabetes Goals for 2007

1. Regularly check and record your blood sugar.
2. Inspect feet daily.
3. Exercise daily – walk, garden, chair exercises, aerobics (check with your doctor).
4. Schedule dilated eye exam and dental exam.
5. Visit a diabetes educator and dietitian.
6. Learn results of your microalbumin, A1C, and LDL cholesterol tests.



## New Year's is a Great Time to Quit Smoking for Good

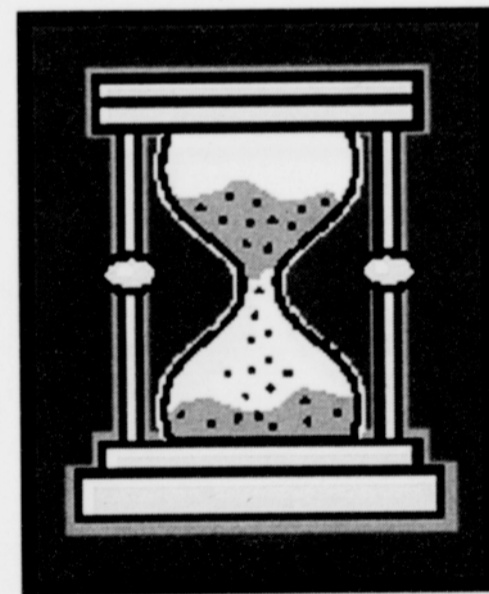
Often people have a hard time quitting the first time. Former smokers have to practice quitting as much as they practice smoking. On average, it takes six to eight attempts to successfully quit.

With the help of nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) such as a patch or gum, however, the quit attempts can be fewer and can make withdrawal symptoms less severe over a long period of time.

**Reminder:** You cannot smoke/chew at **any time** while using an NRT or else you run the risk of reaching toxic levels of nicotine in your system.

Second, there is a strong belief that quitting cold turkey is the best way to quit because of the short time nicotine stays in your system and the short time of physical withdrawal. Nicotine is out of your system in approximately three to four days after quitting, then what remains are the habits around smoking or chewing. The choice is up to you.

DeAnna Pearl, Tobacco Prevention and Education coordinator, can help you prepare for your quit, help you set



a quit date, and provide you with tools to help you have a successful quit.

Contact your provider today or call DeAnna at 1-800-648-0449, ext. 1659, or 541-444-9659. You also can contact the free Oregon QUIT LINE at 1-877-270-7867.

- Step One: See your provider about NRTs.
- Step Two: Set a quit date.
- Step Three: Prepare for your quit.
- Step Four: Get support from family or friends.