



# How to clean between your teeth

## Interdental brushes proved to be most efficient tool

**When we think about keeping our teeth and gingivae healthy, what comes to mind for many of us is a gentle toothbrush, a good brushing technique and some fluoride-containing toothpaste. True, these are the main ingredients in keeping the largest part of our teeth and gums healthy. However, as our understanding of the oral flora progresses, we have come to realise that conventional brushing methods still fail to access a neglected part of the mouth: the interdental space.**

### One interdental space, 16 billion bacteria

The interdental space is the most inaccessible and vulnerable part of the mouth. As such, it is also the perfect place for disease-causing bacteria and plaque to accumulate and cause damage to the teeth, periodontium and gingivae. Even more so than dental floss, mouthwash and the bristles of conventional toothbrushes, interdental brushes have proved to be the most effective tool in removing virulent bacteria from these spaces between our teeth.

"In one particular study we managed to collect over 16 billion virulent bacteria from each interdental space in young, healthy adults using interdental brushes, proving them to be the most efficient tool for cleaning interdentally," said Prof. Denis Bourgeois, a pioneer in research on oral prophylaxis, interdental biofilm management and interdental brushing techniques. Unfortunately, the use of interdental brushes has not yet become commonplace.

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"Interdental brushes are relatively new," Prof. Bourgeois continued. "Especially as a cleaning method for people without

periodontal disease. In the same way that dentists in the 1950s had to explain to their patients that brushing their teeth with a normal brush was necessary, people nowadays need to be informed that brushing interdentally is just as important. Both historically and traditionally, dental floss has been the tool of choice for cleaning narrow spaces, as it has been somewhat of a market leader as well as the only way to access the interdental space for people with healthy gums. However, using dental floss is no longer preferred as, unlike using interdental brushes, its use is not supported by conclusive scientific evidence. And, with today's fine interdental brushes, we have the most efficient means to access 98% of all interdental spaces in healthy people!"

### A brush for each patient

Cleaning interdentally should be accompanied by a dentist's instruction regarding technique and brush size. An interdental brush should have the most efficient cleaning potential, but it should not be so large as to cause trauma. "The reason we used Curaprox interdental brushes for our study is the calibrating colorimetric probe that goes with the brushes," said Prof. Bourgeois. "The probe makes it possible to easily determine the width of the interdental spaces as well as the right brush size for physiologically healthy interdental spaces." Still, many people are reluctant to use

interdental brushes owing to bleeding upon first use. According to Prof. Bourgeois, this initial bleeding is entirely normal. He explained: "Interdental brushes themselves do not provoke bleeding. The bleeding is the result of inflammation of the interdental space owing to bacteria. When disturbed, bleeding occurs. Similarly, if you were to stop brushing your teeth for a week, which I do not advise, and then start brushing them again, your gingivae would bleed as well. The reason here is the same; there would have been an increase in bacteria, inflammation as a result, and finally, bleeding when you brush."

"The greatest challenge remains explaining the importance of using interdental brushes to people with supposedly healthy teeth and gums," concluded Prof. Bourgeois. "Nonetheless, the disease-causing bacteria in the interdental spaces are there."

### For more information

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**The study can be accessed at**  
<https://bit.ly/2ZCIE6q>  
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