

**WHITING FORENSIC HOSPITAL**  
**Nursing Policy and Procedure Manual**

**SECTION G:               PATIENT SAFETY**

**CHAPTER 24:   SAFETY/SECURITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE 24.5: SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS IN THE  
DISTRIBUTION OF DENTAL FLOSS**

**Standard of Practice:**

The Registered Nurse will ensure that the patient safely and appropriately utilizes dental floss (or other inter-dental aid) for gently cleaning between teeth on a daily basis.

**Standard of Care:**

The Patient can expect to be provided with dental floss (or other inter-dental aid) daily in order to adequately clean between his/her teeth. On a locked unit, the patient can expect to be supervised by staff when using dental floss.

**Policy:**

Dental Floss (or other inter-dental aids) shall be provided to the patient by staff on a daily basis to ensure that proper dental care occurs according to the standards of practice.

Dental Floss (or other inter-dental aids) can pose a danger to patients. Therefore use by patients shall be supervised by staff, with the exception of those units which are open (unlocked). Selected patients in the Dutcher Service are permitted to keep their own dental floss among their personal effects.

Proper disposal of used dental floss (or other inter-dental aids) shall occur under staff supervision in trash containers which are not accessible to patients.

**Procedure:**

1. Staff shall encourage the patient to practice good daily oral care which includes brushing one's teeth at least twice a day and cleaning between teeth with floss (or other inter-dental aids) once daily.
2. Staff shall order dental floss from the Central Supply.
3. Staff may obtain other inter-dental aids through the dental department.
4. Staff shall distribute dental floss (or other inter-dental aids) to patients and supervise the patient while using.
5. If staff need to teach the patient how to use dental floss, do so in the following manner:
  - a. Break off about 18 inches of floss and have the patient wind most of it around his/her middle finger. Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes used. Instruct the patient to hold the floss lightly between the thumbs and forefingers.
  - b. Guide the floss between teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap floss into the gum.
  - c. 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.
  - d. 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.
  - e. Repeat the method on the rest of the teeth.
  - f. Clean the back side of the last tooth.
6. Upon completion of flossing, staff will instruct the patients to deposit the used dental floss or other inter-dental aid in the trash container provided by the staff, who then removes the container out of the patient area.