

## **UPDATE FOR USING THE WATERPIK**

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**By Dr. Victor M. Sternberg**

As I written in the past to our patients, the use of a WaterPik twice a day is an extremely effective way to remove bacteria that is difficult to reach with dental floss or a toothbrush. I have seen remarkable changes in my own mouth and in the mouths of my patients when the WaterPik is used effectively and frequently.

However, there are very specific principles in using it effectively.

- 1) The WaterPik is primarily to be used between your teeth where the bacteria cannot be reached by a brush and where most of the periodontal disease and tooth decay occur. It is no accident that most of the cavities people have and most of the gum pockets that develop are between the teeth. This area is particularly vulnerable and difficult to reach. High-pressure water delivered by a WaterPik every 12 hours effectively removes the bacteria and prevents the bacteria from getting thick enough to cause decay and periodontal disease. However, it only works when the WaterPik tip is held between the teeth for a minimum of a slow count of 5 or rapid count of 10. It must be moved from space to space between each one of the teeth beginning on the outside and followed by up targeting the spaces on the inside or tongue side of your teeth. The time you spend and the position of the WaterPik is critical to its effectiveness.
- 2) It is often difficult if you have more than 24 teeth to complete reaching every space between your teeth with only one fill-up of the WaterPik tank. I myself use almost 2 full tanks of water to reach all of the areas between my teeth. It takes a minimum of 45 seconds for the WaterPik tank to empty at the highest setting of 10.
- 3) Cleaning between your teeth, for most of us, is more important than any other area to clean. If pressed for time which is an issue for many patients and you have to choose between using the WaterPik or using a toothbrush, the WaterPik is more important. This is counterintuitive but is based upon science along with where the plaque forms and where it is most damaging.
- 4) The key to effective oral hygiene and preventive care requires frequency, twice a day, technique which often needs to be reinstructed by the hygienist since it's sometimes difficult to master in the beginning but easier as you do it more frequently, and finally a commitment to understanding that it is the key method of preventing recurrent periodontal disease and reducing decay.

Please contact our office if you have any questions about the benefits and the technique for using a WaterPik or as it's often called a Water Flosser.

Yours truly,  
Victor M. Sternberg, D.M.D.

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