

No flossing? No way!

Recent news articles have trumpeted a shocking discovery: You don't need to floss!

On a tip from his son's orthodontist, a reporter for the Associated Press filed a Freedom Of Information Act request for research on flossing's benefits.

When the request turned up only poor-quality studies, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services quietly dropped the recommendation to floss in the latest edition of their Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Many news organizations have taken this to mean that there's no reason to floss. But as anyone who has ever had a piece of corn stuck in their front teeth knows, you don't need a study to tell you that flossing is very good for you.

Aside from the fact that having food stuck between your teeth is uncomfortable and unsightly, leaving food fragments wedged against your gums can encourage bacterial growth.

Bacteria can cause tooth decay, gum disease and other problems; infections in your mouth can spread to other parts of the body.

Gum disease is a very, very common problem. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that almost half of all Americans suffer from some form of periodontal disease. For Americans over 65, that number rises to over 70 percent.

If the studies to back up flossing are of poor quality, perhaps that's a sign that more and better studies need to be done. It's not a sign that you can stop flossing! There is just no good reason to stop using such a simple, affordable, effective tool to help keep your gums and teeth healthy.

