



How to Clean Around Dental Implants

Dental implants are one of the most reliable and long-lasting solutions for replacing missing teeth, but only if you care for them properly. While implants aren't susceptible to decay like natural teeth, the tissues and bone around them **can** still become inflamed or infected. In fact, improper cleaning is one of the leading causes of implant failure due to **peri-implantitis**, a gum disease-like condition that causes bone loss around the implant.

The good news? Cleaning around dental implants doesn't have to be complicated, but it **must be thorough and consistent**. In this guide, you'll learn exactly how to clean your implants like a pro, using dentist-approved techniques and tools that keep your investment healthy for the long haul.

Why Implant Cleaning Is Different Than Natural Tooth Care

Natural teeth are supported by a ligament called the **periodontal ligament**, which provides blood flow and immune defenses. Implants, on the other hand, are fused directly into the jawbone without this protective cushion. That means:

- **Less immune defense** around the implant.
- **Plaque buildup** is more dangerous to surrounding tissues.
- **Inflammation spreads faster** and can lead to bone loss.

This makes **preventive care even more critical** around implants than around natural teeth.

Daily Implant Cleaning Routine (step-by-step)

1. Use a Soft-Bristled Manual or Electric Toothbrush

Choose a toothbrush with **soft, rounded bristles** to avoid damaging gum tissue. Electric toothbrushes like the **Philips Sonicare** or **Oral-B iO** are especially effective at removing plaque and biofilm without excess pressure.

Technique:

- Angle the brush at 45 degrees toward the gumline.
- Use gentle, circular motions or follow the electric brush's built-in timer.
- Brush for 2 full minutes, twice a day.
- The bristles of the brush can be dipped in an antimicrobial.
 - **Don't skip** the implant, even if it 'feels clean'.

2. Floss With Implant-Safe Tools

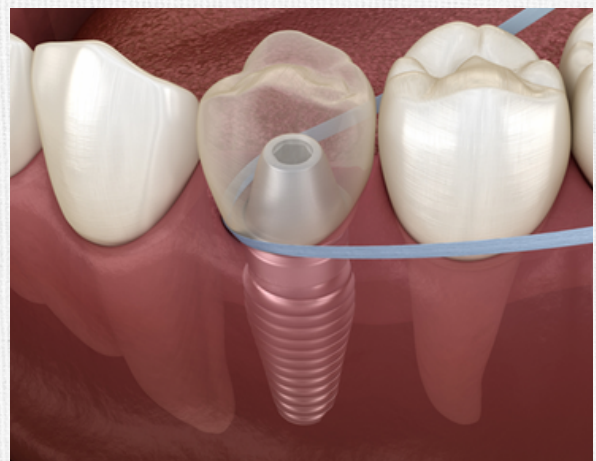
Traditional string floss can sometimes shred around implants or miss areas entirely. Instead, use tools specifically designed for implants:

Best Options:

- **Implant-specific floss** (e.g. **Super Floss, Bridge & Implant Floss**). These have a stiff end, spongy middle, and standard floss end.
- **Interdental brushes** with plastic-coated wire (**TePe, GUM Proxabrush**). Perfect for cleaning between implant crowns and bridges.
- **Water flossers** (e.g. **Waterpik** with Implant Tip) – Excellent for flushing plaque and bacteria below the gumline.

Technique:

- Wrap implant floss gently around the base of the implant crown in a C-shape.
- Move back and forth to clean beneath the crown and under the gumline.
- Use interdental brushes gently without forcing them. Choose a size that fits snugly but comfortably.



Implant tooth cleaning with dental floss

3. Rinse With Antimicrobial Mouthwash

Daily rinsing helps reduce the bacterial load around your implant sites.

Dentist-Recommended Mouthwashes:

- Chlorhexidine gluconate (prescription, short-term use only)
- Alcohol-free antiseptic rinses (e.g. **Crest Pro-Health, ACT Total Care**)
- Xylitol-based rinses for added antimicrobial effect (e.g. **Spry, Xyloburst, Epic**)

Tips:

- Swish for 30-60 seconds.
- Avoid rinsing with water afterward to maintain effectiveness.

4. Clean Under Implant Bridges or Dentures

If you have **All-on-4 implants**, implant-supported bridges, or overdentures, you'll need to clean underneath the prosthesis where food and bacteria hide.

Recommended Tools:

- **Sulcus brushes** (narrow, single-tuft brushes for tight spaces).
- **Water flossers** with plaque seeker tips.
- **Rubber tip stimulators** to gently dislodge debris.
- **Oral irrigators** with antimicrobial rinses.

Technique:

- Focus on the gumline and under the prosthesis.
- Use a mirror to inspect the hard-to-reach areas.
- Spend extra time in posterior (back) regions where buildup is most common.

How Often Should You Clean Around Implants?

Task	Frequency
Brushing	2x Daily
Flossing/Water Flossing	1-2x Daily
Antimicrobial Rinse	1-2x Daily
Interdental Cleaning	Daily
In-Office Checkups	Every 3-6 months (or as advised)

Signs You're Not Cleaning Effectively

If you notice any of the following, it may indicate inflammation around your implants, prompting the need for immediate dental evaluation:

- Bleeding when brushing or flossing.
- Persistent bad breath or metallic taste.
- Swelling or puffiness around the implant.
- Implant crown feels slightly loose or tender.
- Pus, discharge, or gum recession.

Don't wait! Early intervention can prevent irreversible bone loss.

Pro-Tips from Dr. Anderson

- **Label Your Tools:** Use a separate brush or flosser exclusively for implants to avoid cross-contamination.
- **Travel Kit:** Keep a portable implant care kit with floss, picks, and rinse when away from home.
- **Regular Maintenance Visits:** Dental hygienists use special instruments that won't scratch implant surfaces. Skipping cleanings increases long-term risk.

Invest Time to Protect Your Investment

Dental implants can last **20 years or more**, but only with proper care. While the routine may take a little extra time compared to caring for natural teeth, it's a small investment in keeping your smile strong, stable, and infection-free.

Need help choosing the right tools for your implant type? At Dr. Matt Anderson's office, we tailor implant maintenance plans for every patient and offer hands-on guidance for daily home care.