

Waterpik or Interdental brushes – What the evidence REALLY says

By Deborah M. Lyle, RDH, BS, MS

Waterpik® Water Flosser is more effective than interdental brushes for improving oral health.

I continue to hear that interdental brushes (IDB) are the device of choice for patients with periodontal disease based on [systematic reviews](#). Not so fast. Here is the whole story...

FACT: Brushing alone, regardless of power source, bristle design or method, is not enough

FACT: Interdental cleaning is essential to maintain gingival health

FACT: Efficacy is based on the reduction of gingival bleeding and inflammation

Interdental brushes can remove plaque

True. IDB remove more plaque than flossing or wood sticks. The problem is that the evidence for reducing gingival inflammation is limited. Plaque removal without reduction in inflammation is not the desired outcome for improving oral health.

The goal is clinical health and periodontal stability – no bleeding.

Waterpik® Water Flosser removes plaque AND reduces gingival bleeding and inflammation

A [systematic review](#) from 2008 reported that an oral irrigator (water flosser) did not remove plaque but had a tendency toward reduction in gingival bleeding. Based on the research included in the review, this is a correct statement.

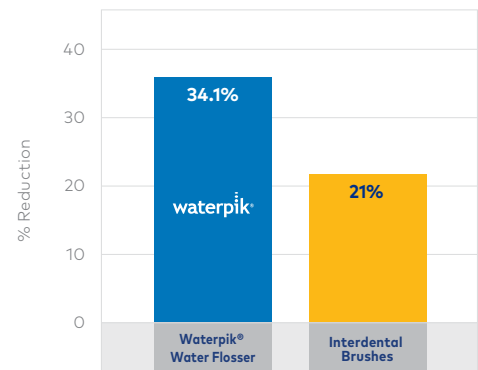
BUT, if you look at the data closely you will see that different brands were included with different modes of action. The studies that used the Waterpik® Water Flosser provided **positive results** and the studies that used other devices showed non-significant results.

- Take-away: not all products are the same and a lot has happened since 2008.

Waterpik® Water Flosser or Interdental Brushes?

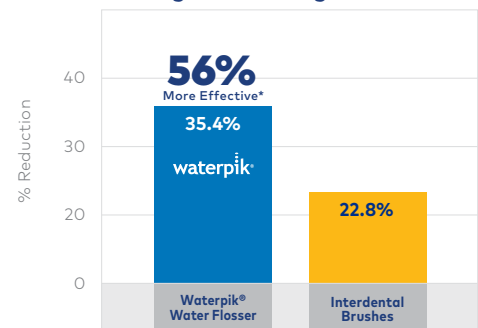
Many people like IDB for the wide open spaces known as the black triangle ▲. This is logical and effective for cleaning the proximal surface of the adjacent teeth. Unfortunately, this is late in the game when destruction has already caused loss of attachment. Hint: better to prevent the ▲.

Bleeding on Marginal Probing



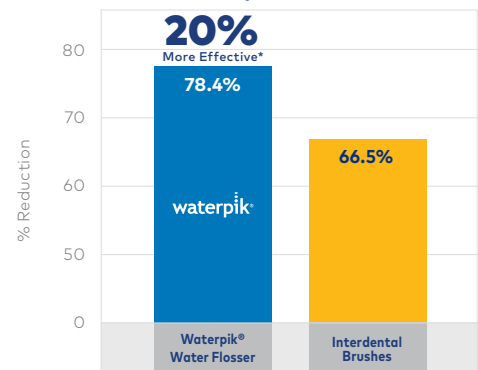
p=0.003
*Statistically significant difference

Gingival Bleeding Reduction



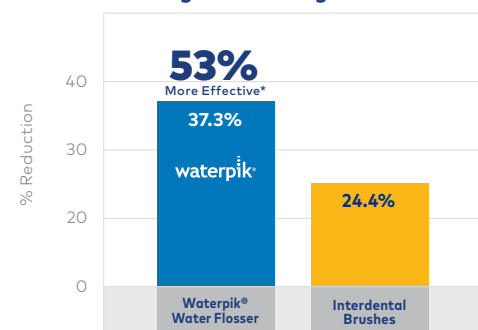
*Whole Mouth

Plaque Removal



p=0.04
*Approximal
*Statistically significant difference

Gingival Bleeding Reduction



*Whole Mouth Approximal
*Statistically significant difference, p<0.001

The Waterpik® Water Flosser has over [80 published research studies](#) demonstrating efficacy and safety.

- Clinically proven to clean pockets up to 6 mm
- Clinically proven to reduce gingival bleeding and inflammation in gingivitis, periodontitis, implant, orthodontic and diabetic patients
- Access varying interdental spaces with only one device, no need to switch tips based on space
- Significantly [more effective](#) than interdental brushes.

Take the easy way out

As I always say, if your patient looks good and is not bleeding, then don't change anything. But if they don't, forget about size of IDB, access in posterior, or worrying about your patient transferring a dirty brush from location to location. Recommend the easy and more effective device, the Waterpik® Water Flosser. The research supports this decision.

Never used a Waterpik® Water Flosser?

Check out the [special offer](#) and let us know what you think.