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United States Patent	12383386
Kind Code	B2
Date of Patent	August 12, 2025
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Hybrid dental device

Abstract

A hybrid dental tool is disclosed herein. The hybrid dental tool includes a flossing head and a handle portion. The flossing head can include a filament stretching between the leading arm and a trailing arm. The flossing head can be connected to the handle portion. The handle portion can include features that can receive and retain a pick. The pick can be a soft pick or a hard pick. The handle portion can further include an integrated pick that can be located at a free end of the handle portion.

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Appl. No.: 18/165222

Filed: February 06, 2023

Prior Publication Data

Document Identifier	Publication Date
US 20230293277 A1	Sep. 21, 2023

Related U.S. Application Data

continuation parent-doc US 16543401 20190816 US 11589968 child-doc US 18165222
continuation parent-doc US 15850227 20171221 US 10413388 20190917 child-doc US 16543401
continuation parent-doc US 14546961 20141118 US 9848966 20171226 child-doc US 15850227
us-provisional-application US 61985989 20140429

Publication Classification

Int. Cl.: **A61C15/04** (20060101); **A61C15/02** (20060101)

U.S. Cl.:

CPC **A61C15/02** (20130101); **A61C15/046** (20130101);

Field of Classification Search

CPC: A61C (15/046); A61C (15/02); A61C (15/04)

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a Continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/543,401 entitled “HYBRID DENTAL DEVICE”, filed Aug. 16, 2019, which is a Continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 15/850,227 entitled “HYBRID DENTAL DEVICE,” filed Dec. 21, 2017, which is a Continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 14/546,961 entitled “HYBRID DENTAL DEVICE,” filed Nov. 18, 2014, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,848,966, issued on Dec. 26, 2017, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/985,989 entitled “HYBRID DENTAL DEVICE,” filed on Apr. 29, 2014, the entirety of each of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

(1) The present invention relates, generally, to dental devices, and more particularly to dental hygiene devices.

(2) While dental hygiene has long been important in American and other cultures for maintaining a desirable physical appearance, recent discoveries have increased the urgency with which dental hygiene is maintained. These recent discoveries have linked oral bacteria to other, more serious diseases such as, for example, heart disease. In light of the increased importance of dental hygiene, new devices are desired to improve dental hygiene.

BRIEF SUMMARY

(3) One aspect of the present disclosure relates to a hybrid dental device. The hybrid dental device includes a pick including a shaft and a cleaner, and a flosser. In some embodiments, the flosser includes a flossing portion and a handle, which handle can include a pick depression. In some embodiments, the pick depression can receive the shaft and the cleaner of the pick. The handle can include a pick retainer. In some embodiments, the pick retainer can retain the pick within the pick depression.

(4) In some embodiments, the flossing portion includes a leading arm and a trailing arm that can be, for example, connected by a link arm. In some embodiments, a filament extends from the leading arm to the trailing arm, which filament can be, for example, dental floss. In some embodiments, the link arm can include a bite plate that can extend parallel to the filament. In some embodiments, the pick retainer can include a channel that can receive a portion of the pick.

(5) In some embodiments of the hybrid dental device, the channel can include a first dimension. In some embodiments, the first dimension can be smaller than a width of the cleaner. In some embodiments, the width of the cleaner can be measured perpendicular to the shaft of the pick and/or can be measured at the widest portion of the pick. In some embodiments, the cleaner of the pick can be deformable to allow movement of the cleaner through the channel.

(6) In some embodiments, the pick retainer can include at least one feature that can deformably engage with the pick. In some embodiments, the handle can include a connecting end and a free end. In some embodiments, the connecting end of the handle connects the handle to the flosser. In some embodiments, the hybrid dental device further includes a second pick located at the free end of the handle. In some embodiments, the second pick can be a soft pick or a hard pick.

(7) One aspect of the present disclosure relates to a hybrid dental device. The hybrid dental device includes a pick having a shaft and a cleaner and a flosser. In some embodiments, the flosser includes a flossing portion, and a handle having a pick retainer that can detachably connect the pick to the handle.

(8) In some embodiments of the hybrid dental device, the flossing portion can have a leading arm and a trailing arm connected by a link arm. In some embodiments, the link arm can have a bite plate extending parallel to the filament. In some embodiments, the pick can be a soft pick. In some embodiments, the handle can have a connecting end and a free end, which connecting end of the handle connects the handle to the flosser, and which the free end is distal from the connection of the connecting end and the flosser. In some embodiments, the hybrid dental device can include a second pick located at the free end of the handle, which second pick is protected by the pick when the pick is detachably connected to the handle.

(9) Further areas of applicability of the present disclosure will become apparent from the detailed description provided hereinafter. It should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating various embodiments, are intended for purposes of illustration only and are not intended to necessarily limit the scope of the disclosure.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(1) FIG. 1 is a front view of one embodiment of hybrid dental tool.

(2) FIG. 2 is a front view of another embodiment of the hybrid dental tool.

(3) FIG. 3 is a front view of one embodiment of the flosser of the hybrid dental tool.

(4) FIG. 4 is a back view of one embodiment of the flosser of the hybrid dental tool.

(5) FIG. 5 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the flosser of the hybrid dental tool.

(6) FIG. 6 is a top view of one embodiment of the flosser of the hybrid dental tool.

(7) In the appended figures, similar components and/or features may have the same reference label. Where the reference label is used in the specification, the description is applicable to any one of the similar components having the same reference label.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

(8) In some embodiments, the present disclosure relates to a hybrid dental device and/or hybrid dental tool. In some embodiments, the hybrid dental tool can integrate multiple care devices into a single device. In some embodiments, the hybrid dental tool can include a flosser and one or several picks. In some embodiments, the one or several picks can be integrated into the flosser, and/or retained by the flosser. In one embodiment, a first pick, which can be, for example, a soft pick, can be retained in a handle portion of the flosser. In some embodiments, a second pick which can be, for example, a hard pick, can be formed into a portion of the handle of the flosser.

(9) For the purposes of explanation, the ensuing details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of various embodiments. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that various embodiments may be practiced without some of these specific details. For example, various features may be shown as components of some specific embodiments. In other instances, previously known features may be shown without unnecessary detail in order to avoid obscuring the inventive features of the described embodiments.

(10) Embodiments provided herein are examples only, and are not intended to limit the scope, applicability, or configuration of the disclosure. Rather, the ensuing description of the embodiments will provide those skilled in the art with an enabling description for implementing one or more embodiments. It should be understood that various changes may be made in the function and arrangement of elements without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosed embodiments.

(11) With reference now to FIG. 1, a front view of one embodiment of a hybrid dental tool **100** is shown. The hybrid dental tool **100** can comprise a variety of shapes and sizes. In some embodiments, the hybrid dental tool can be sized so as to be easily held in a hand and to be used within a mouth. The hybrid dental tool **100** can be made from a variety materials. In some embodiments, the hybrid dental tool **100** can be made from one or several plastics, metals,

composites, polymers, or the like. In some embodiments, the materials for the hybrid dental tool **100** are selected based on desired properties of a hybrid dental tool and/or of the specific portion of the hybrid dental tool.

(12) The hybrid dental tool **100** can include a flosser **101**. The flosser **101** includes a flossing head **102**, also referred to herein as a flossing portion or a flosser. The flossing head **102** can include features configured to allow use of the hybrid dental tool **100** and flossing teeth. The flossing head **102** can comprise a variety of shapes and sizes, but should be a size and shape so as to allow a user to access all of the teeth in the user's mouth, and particularly the teeth located in the rear of the mouth.

(13) The flossing head **102** can include a leading arm **104** and a trailing arm **106**. In some embodiments, the leading arm **104** can be located at the front of the flossing head **102** and/or of the flosser **101** and the trailing arm **106** can be relatively more centrally located in the flosser **101**. In some embodiments, the leading arm **104** and the trailing arm **106** are parallel, and in some embodiments, the leading arm **104** and the trailing arm **106** are nonparallel. In some embodiments, the leading arm **104** and the trailing arm both extend from a link arm **110** and are connected by a filament **108**. This connection of the leading arm **104**, the trailing arm **106**, and the link arm **110** can create a U-shaped flossing head **102**. In some embodiments, the connection of the leading arm **104**, the trailing arm **106**, and link arm **110** can give other shapes to the flossing head **102** such as, for example, a C-shape, a trapezoidal shape, or the like. In some embodiments, the filament **108** can be a thin single fiber and/or group of fibers that is sized, shaped, and configured for insertion between the patient's teeth. In some embodiments, the filament **108** can comprise dental floss.

(14) As seen in FIG. 1, some or all of the leading arm **104**, the trailing arm **106** and the link arm **110** can include one or several tiers **112**. In some embodiments, the one or several tiers **112** can improve the appearance of the flossing head **102** and increase the rigidity of the flossing head **102**. In some embodiments, the increased rigidity of the flossing head **102** can decrease the likelihood of bending and/or deformation of one of the leading arm **104**, the trailing arm **106**, and the link arm **110** during flossing.

(15) As further seen in FIG. 1, in some embodiments, the link arm **110** can include a bite plate **114**. In some embodiments, the bite plate **114** can be sized, shaped, and positioned so as to allow a user to bite on the bite plate **114** to increase the force with which the filament **108** is pushed between teeth during flossing. In some embodiments, the bite plate **114** can comprise a thickness and/or width that is greater than the thickness and/or width of the link arm **110**. In some embodiments, this increased thickness and/or width of the bite plate **114** can increase stability of the hybrid dental tool **100** when a user is biting on the bite plate **114**. In some embodiments, the bite plate **114** can extend parallel to the filament **108**.

(16) The flosser **101** can include a handle portion **116**. In some embodiments, the handle portion **116** can be sized and shaped so as to allow a user to hold the handle portion **116** to control operation of the hybrid dental device **100**. The handle portion **116** can include a connecting end **118** that connects to the flossing head **102**, and specifically can connect to one or more of the link arm **110** and the trailing arm **106**. The handle portion **116** can further include a free end **120**. In some embodiments, the free end **120** is located opposite the connecting end **118**, and does not directly connect to the flossing head **102**, but rather connects to the flossing head **102** via the connecting end **118**. In other words, the free end **120** is located distally from the connection of the connecting end **118** of the handle portion **116** to the flossing head **102**.

(17) In some embodiments, a pick can be removably attached to the handle portion **116**. In some embodiments, the pick can be integral to, but separable from the handle portion **116**. In one embodiment, for example, the pick can be connected to the handle portion **116** via one or several breakable connections, which connections can be broken to separate the pick from the handle portion **116**. In some embodiments, the pick can be a separate component from the handle portion **116** and can be connected to the handle portion **116** via one or several features of the handle portion

116 and/or the pick. Such an embodiment is depicted in FIG. 1, wherein the handle portion **116** includes a pick receptacle **122** extending from the free end **120** towards the connecting end **118**. The pick receptacle **122** can be configured to receive and/or retain a pick. In some embodiments, the pick receptacle **122** can be sized so as to receive the pick, and specifically can have one or several dimensions larger than one or several corresponding dimensions of the pick so as to thereby allow portions of the pick to be received within the pick receptacle **122**. In some embodiments, the pick receptacle **122** can be a depression in the handle portion **116** of the hybrid dental device **100**.

(18) In line with the purpose of receiving some or all of the pick, the pick receptacle **122** can comprise a variety of shapes and sizes and can be located on a variety of portions of the handle portion **116**. In some embodiments, the pick receptacle **122** includes a tip receptacle **124** sized and shaped to receive the tip of the pick, a shaft receptacle **126** sized and shaped to receive a shaft of the pick, and a grip receptacle **128** sized and shaped to receive some or all of the grip of the pick. In some embodiments, the tip receptacle **124**, the shaft receptacle **126**, and the grip receptacle **128** can receive the some or all of the pick. Thus, in some embodiments, the pick can be completely received within the volume defined by the pick receptacle **122**, and in some embodiments, the pick can be partially received within the volume defined by the pick receptacle **122** and can, therefore, partially extend from the volume defined by the pick receptacle **122**.

(19) As further seen in FIG. 1, the handle portion **116** can include an extending arm **130**. In some embodiments, the extending arm **130** can extend around portions of the pick receptacle **122** such as, for example, around portions of the grip receptacle **128**. In some embodiments, the extending arm **130** can be configured to protect the pick from being snagged and/or to increase the ergonomics of the handle portion **116**. In some embodiments, which will be discussed at greater length below, the extending arm **130** can be configured for other dental use.

(20) The hybrid dental tool **100** can include a pick. In some embodiments, the pick can be configured for insertion between teeth to clean between the teeth. In some embodiments, the pick **132** can comprise a hard pick made of a hard material, and in some embodiments, the pick **132** can comprise a soft pick. In some embodiments, a soft pick can include a hard component which can be partially or completely covered with a soft outer layer.

(21) The pick **132** can include a grip **134** that can be sized and shaped for manipulation by user, a shaft **136**, and a tip **138** connected to the grip by the shaft **136**. In some embodiments, the tip **138** can be sized and shaped to facilitate cleaning between teeth and/or to facilitate insertion between teeth. In some embodiments, for example, the tip **138** can taper to a point and can, for example, be cone shaped. In some embodiments, the tip **138** can extend to a point which can be, for example, a rounded point, and/or a sharpened point.

(22) In some embodiments, the tip **138** can be defined by one or several of a length, a width, and a diameter. Similarly, in some embodiments, the shaft **136** can be defined by one or several of a length, a width, and a diameter. In some embodiments, the length of both the tip **138** and the shaft **136** can be measured in the direction of the extension of the shaft **136** and the tip **138** from the grip **134**. In some embodiments, the width and/or diameter of the widest portion of the tip **138** can be larger than the width and/or diameter of the widest portion of the shaft **136**.

(23) The tip **138** of the pick **132** can include one or several cleaning protrusions **140**. In some embodiments, the one or several cleaning protrusions **140** can be configured to massage the gums of the user and/or to improve cleaning of the area between the teeth. The cleaning protrusions **140** can comprise a variety of shapes and sizes. In some embodiments, the shapes and sizes of the cleaning protrusions **140** can be influenced by whether the pick **132** is a soft pick or a hard pick. In one embodiment, for example, the cleaning protrusions **140** can be larger when the pick **132** is a soft pick than when the pick **132** is a hard pick. In some embodiments, the one or several cleaning protrusions **140** can include a plurality of knobs regularly spaced along and around the tip **138** of the pick **132**.

(24) With reference now to FIG. 2, a front view of another embodiment of the hybrid dental tool

100 is shown. As seen in FIG. 2, the hybrid dental tool **100** includes the flosser **101** having the flossing head **102** and the handle portion **116**. The handle portion **116** is connected to the flossing head **102** via the connecting end **118**. Opposite the connecting end **118** is the free end **120**. In the embodiment depicted in FIG. 2, the pick receptacle **122** extends from the free end **120** towards the connecting end **118** of the handle portion **116**. As further seen in FIG. 2, the pick **132** is retained within the pick receptacle **122**, and specifically, the tip **138** of the pick **132** is located within the tip receptacle **124**, the shaft **136** of the pick **132** is located within the shaft receptacle **126**, and the grip **134** of the pick **132** is located, at least in part, in the grip receptacle **128**. In the embodiment of the pick **132** depicted in FIG. 2, the width and/or diameter of the largest portion of the tip **138** of the pick **132** is larger than the width and/or diameter of the shaft **136** of the pick **132**.

(25) As seen in FIG. 2, the handle portion **116** includes a retention feature **206**. The retention feature **206** can comprise any feature configured to retain the connection between the pick **132** and the handle portion **116**. In some embodiments, the retention feature **206** can be one or several features that deformably interact with the pick **132** to retain the pick within the pick receptacle **122**. In some embodiments, these features can themselves deform, can deform the pick **132**, or can both deform themselves and the pick **132** to allow the retention of the pick **132** and the separation of the pick **132** from the handle portion **116**. In some embodiments, these features can create a force fit and/or friction fit between the pick **132** and the pick receptacle **122**. In the embodiment depicted in FIG. 2, the retention feature **206** is a covering extending over a portion of the pick receptacle **122**. As seen, the covering over the portion of the pick receptacle **122** is sized to allow insertion of the tip **138** of the pick **132** into and through the volume defined by the covering and the pick receptacle **122**, and to receive the shaft **136** within this volume.

(26) The hybrid dental tool **100**, and specifically the handle portion **116** of the hybrid dental tool **100** includes a handle top **200** and an opposing handle bottom **202**. In the embodiment depicted in FIG. 2, the pick receptacle **122** is located relatively more proximate to the handle bottom **202** than the handle top **200**. Due to this positioning of the pick receptacle **122**, the extending arm **130** extends along the handle top **200** of the handle portion **116**. Specifically in the embodiment depicted in FIG. 2, the extending arm **130** of the handle portion **116** is formed into an integrated pick **208**. In some embodiments, the integrated pick **208** can be used for performing dental hygiene separate from the flossing head **102** and the pick **132**. In some embodiments, the integrated pick **208**, also referred to herein as the second pick, can be a hard pick, and in some embodiments, the integrated pick **208** can be a soft pick that can be formed by, for example, double injection molding. In such an embodiment, the hybrid dental tool **100** depicted in FIG. 2 is formed during a first step in the double injection molding process, wherein a hard plastic is injection molded to form the hybrid dental tool **100**, and a second, pliable layer is applied to the integrated pick **208** during a second step of the injection molding process. Like pick **132**, the integrated pick **208** can comprise a variety of shapes and sizes. In some embodiments, the integrated pick **208** can extend to a point, which point can be rounded and/or sharpened.

(27) In some embodiments, the integrated pick **208** can be positioned such that when the pick **132** is connected to the handle portion **116** of the flosser **101**, portions of the integrated pick **208**, and particularly the point of the integrated pick **208**, are protected by portions of the pick **132**. Specifically, and as seen in FIG. 2, the grip **134** of the pick **132** is positioned adjacent to the integrated pick **208** when the pick **132** is connected to and/or retained by the handle portion **116**. In such a position, the integrated pick **208** is protected by the grip **134** in that the tip of the integrated pick **208** does not extend beyond the grip **134**, and thus is not easily snagged.

(28) With reference now to FIG. 3, an embodiment of the flosser **101** is shown. As seen in FIG. 3, the flosser **101** includes a handle portion **116** having a handle top **200** and handle bottom **202**. The handle portion **116** further includes a pick receptacle **122** that includes a retention feature **206** and a back plate **300**. In some embodiments, the retention feature **206** defines one outer limit of the pick receptacle **122** and the back plate **300** defines an opposing outer limit of the pick receptacle **122**. In

the embodiment depicted in FIG. 3, the back plate **300** does not extend to the termination point of the integrated pick **208**. Advantageously, this early termination of the back plate **300** allows the user to grip both sides of the grip **134** of the pick **132**.

(29) With reference now to FIG. 4, a back view of one embodiment of the flosser **101** is shown. As seen in FIG. 4, some embodiments of the flosser **101** can include a retention opening **402**. In some embodiments, the retention opening **402** can be an opening extending up into the interior of, for example, the retention feature **206**. In some embodiments, the retention opening **402** can receive a feature that can be configured to secure the pick **132** within the pick receptacle **122**. In other embodiments, the retention opening **402** can merely be an artifact of an advantageous molding process.

(30) With reference now to FIG. 5, a perspective view of one embodiment of the flosser **101** is shown. As seen in FIG. 5, the retention feature **206** can comprise a channel **502**, which can be, as shown in FIG. 5, for example, an enclosed channel and/or a covered channel, that can be sized and shaped to receive portions of the pick **132** and to retain the pick **132** within the pick receptacle **122**. Specifically, as seen in FIG. 5, the channel **502** can have a dimension, measured perpendicular to the direction of the extension of the pick receptacle **122** in the handle portion **116** from the free end **122** the connecting end **118**, that can be, for example, larger than the width and/or diameter of the shaft **136** of the pick **132**. In some embodiments, the dimension of the channel **502** can be, for example, smaller than the width and/or diameter of the tip **138** of the pick. In some embodiments, this can advantageously retain the pick **132** in the pick receptacle **122** until a force is applied to the pick **132** and the handle portion **116** sufficient to deform the tip **138** of the pick **132** to allow the tip **138** to pass through the channel **502**.

(31) With reference now to FIG. 6, a top view of one embodiment of the flosser **101** is shown. As seen in FIG. 6, the bite plate **114** is located on the flossing tip **102**. As depicted, the bite plate **114** includes portions having an increased width and/or thickness to facilitate the application of force to the bite plate **114** to facilitate in the penetration of the filament **108** into places between the teeth.

(32) While various embodiments of present invention have been described, it will be apparent to those of skill in the art that many more embodiments and implementations are possible that are within the scope of this invention. Accordingly, the present invention is not to be limited to the described embodiments.

Claims

1. A dental flosser comprising: a flossing head having flossing filament extending between a front arm and a back arm, the flossing head having a length extending from a front to a back, and a thickness, the flossing head comprising exterior surfaces and the flossing head defining an interior portion comprising interior surfaces facing each other or the flossing filament; a handle extending obliquely from the flossing head to a distal end, the handle having a top and a bottom separated from the top by a handle-height, the handle having a handle-thickness, wherein the handle-height varies between a proximal end and the distal end, the handle comprising a pick extending from the top of the distal end of the handle; and a stability feature extending on at least a portion of a top of the flossing head, the top portion located on at least some of the exterior surfaces of the flossing head, the top portion opposing the flossing filament, wherein a stability-feature-thickness varies across the top of the flossing head.
2. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein the stability-feature-thickness is greater than each of the flossing-head-thickness and the handle-thickness.
3. The dental flosser of claim 2, wherein the stability feature extends from the top of the flossing head onto at least a portion of the handle.
4. The dental flosser of claim 3, wherein the stability feature defines a planar bite surface at the top of the flossing head.

5. The dental flosser of claim 3, wherein the stability feature defines a non-planar bite surface.
 6. The dental flosser of claim 5, wherein the planar bite surface is non-parallel to the filament.
 7. The dental flosser of claim 2, wherein the stability feature extends from the top of the flossing head to the front of the flossing head.
 8. The dental flosser of claim 7, wherein the stability feature extends along at least a portion of the front of the flossing head.
 9. The dental flosser of claim 8, wherein the stability feature comprises a first curve and a second curve.
 10. The dental flosser of claim 9, wherein the first curve of the stability feature transitions the stability feature from extending along the top of the flossing head to along the handle.
 11. The dental flosser of claim 10, wherein the second curve of the stability feature transitions the stability feature from extending along the top of the flossing head to along the front of the flossing head.
 12. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein the varying handle-height creates a bulbous-shaped handle.
 13. The dental flosser of claim 12, wherein the bulbous-shaped handle has a maximum height at a location intermediate between the flossing head and the distal end of the handle.
 14. The dental flosser of claim 13, wherein the pick extends unprotected from the distal end of the handle.
 15. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein the front arm has a front-arm-thickness, and a stability-feature thickness is greater than the front-arm-thickness.
 16. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein the back arm has a back-arm-thickness, and a stability-feature-thickness is greater than the back-arm-thickness.
 17. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein a stability-feature-thickness tapers from a first greater value to a first lesser value, wherein the first lesser value is equal to the handle-thickness.
 18. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein a leading arm has a leading-arm-thickness, and a stability-feature-thickness tapers from a second greater value to a second lesser value, wherein the second lesser value is equal to the leading-arm-thickness.
 19. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein the stability feature comprises a bite plate.
 20. The dental flosser of claim 1, wherein a plane defined by the flossing filament and a point of the pick extends from the proximal end through the distal end of the handle and through the front arm and the back arm of the flossing head.
 21. A dental flosser comprising: a flossing head having flossing filament extending between a front arm and a back arm, the front arm and the back arm connected via a linking arm, and the flossing head having a length extending from a front to a back, and a thickness, the flossing head comprising exterior surfaces and the flossing head defining an interior portion comprising interior surfaces facing each other or the flossing filament; a handle extending obliquely from the flossing head to a distal end, the handle having a top and a bottom separated from the top by a handle-height, the handle having a handle-thickness, wherein the handle-height varies between a proximal end and the distal end, the handle comprising a pick extending from the top of the distal end of the handle; and a stability feature extending on at least a top portion of the linking arm, the top portion located on at least some of the exterior surfaces of the flossing head, the linking arm opposing the flossing filament, wherein a stability-feature-thickness varies across the linking arm.
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