

grin!

news, notes &
entertainment to
keep your smile
healthy & happy

holiday
2012
volume 1, issue 3

liberating libations

4 drinks to enjoy
guilt-free this
holiday season

give the gift of great oral health

10 smile-enhancing ideas

snuff out sniffles

take care of your
smile for a
healthier winter



FEATURE ARTICLE

give the gift of great oral health
10 smile-enhancing ideas

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cavity-free calendar



Happy Holidays!

Countless delectable dishes will likely grace your dinner table this season, and it's not just dessert that's loaded with sugar. Your waistline and teeth will both thank you if you try to limit desserts and other high-sugar offerings, such as canned cranberry sauce, and sweet potatoes with brown sugar or marshmallows; as well as sugary drinks such as eggnog and fruit punch.



mouthing off

We want to hear from you! Send your response to this issue's question to grin@deltadental.com and put "Mouthing Off" in the subject line. Giving us your two cents could win you a Sonicare™ toothbrush! Here's this issue's question:

"What are your secrets for avoiding cold and flu germs this season?"

In our last issue, we asked readers if they have a preferred flavor of dental floss. **Here's what they said:**

"I am a big fan of cool mint floss! It really leaves my mouth feeling squeaky clean."

– Kori P.

"My preferred flavor of dental floss is no flavor."

– Kathy A.

"I love mint dental floss!"

– Linda P.

"Mint :)"

– Susan K.

"Cinnamon or bubble gum."

– Amy A.

"Bacon-flavored floss."

– Lynda J.

"Mint, it is refreshing."

– Deborah C.

"Bacon!"

– Katherine D.

"Mint!"

– Therese P.

"Cinnamon."

– Tina

"Mint but would absolutely love chocolate!"

– Saima R.

by the numbers

How Often Do You Replace Your Child's Toothbrush?
(among children who have teeth)



Sample Size: 837

Source: Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Survey, 2011

Totals and subtotals may not appear to add due to rounding.

readers ask, we answer

Theresa writes:

“My dad had oral cancer. Am I at risk for it, and what signs should I be keeping an eye out for?”



Hi Theresa. Genetics can play a role in the development of oral cancer, but you can decrease your chances of getting it by leading a healthy lifestyle:

- Don't use tobacco or betel quid (another chewable leaf); smokers are six times more likely to get oral cancer than nonsmokers.
- Avoid overindulging in alcohol. More than 70 percent of people with oral cancer are considered heavy drinkers.
- Block harmful UV rays from the sun by wearing lip balm with SPF.
- Include plenty of fruits and veggies on your plate. One study estimates that a diet full of fiber from vegetables and fruits can lower the risk of oral cancer development by up to 50 percent.
- Protect yourself. People with a history of human papillomavirus (HPV) are at higher risk for oral cancer.

Be aware of the symptoms, including mouth sores, pain or numbness, swelling in your gums or jaw, red or white patches and areas that bleed. Make sure you keep regular appointments with your dentist, who will help you watch for warning signs. Your physician can also help if you have questions or concerns.

Got a question you'd like us to answer? Send your question to grin@deltadental.com, and it could be featured in an upcoming issue!



mouth-friendly recipe

No-Sugar-Added Minty Hot Cocoa

Who doesn't like a nice, warm beverage to keep you toasty during the chilly winter months? Ditch the sugary versions and opt for this guilt-free hot chocolate instead.

- 2 tsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1-2 packets of a sweetener such as Splenda® or an all-natural sweetener like stevia
- Dash of salt
- 1 cup 1% milk
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp peppermint extract

Mix cocoa, sweetener and salt in a mug. Microwave milk for about a minute and a half or until hot. Slowly add milk to the cocoa mixture, stirring as you go. Add vanilla and peppermint and stir. Enjoy!

the history of oral health: toothpaste over the ages

3000–5000 B.C. 1780

Ancient Egyptians developed a dental cream made of oxen hooves, myrrh, eggshells, pumice and water. Makes you appreciate mint, doesn't it?



A toothpaste recipe calls for “burnt bread.”

1850s

Toothpastes and powders were first sold in jars. The repeated dunking of multiple toothbrushes into a vat of paste was considered unhygienic by Dr. Washington Sheffield of Connecticut.

1896

Dr. Sheffield invented the first collapsible toothpaste tube for “Dr. Sheffield's Creme Dentifrice” after finding inspiration in artist paint tubes. Too bad the tube was made of lead.



1960s

Fluoride became a standard ingredient in toothpaste.

1987

A brighter smile in a tube! The first whitening toothpaste was invented.





SNUFF YOUR SNIFFLES

take care of your smile for a healthier winter

It's almost inevitable: during cold and flu season (roughly October to May), you're probably going to pick up some kind of bug that leaves you feeling down and out. Fight back by following these tips.

GET THE SHOT

Get over your fear of needles if you want to get through the flu season untouched. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone six months and older should get a yearly flu vaccine. Don't worry; you can still get vaccinated even if you do have aichmophobia (fear of needles) — a nasal spray vaccine is available for most people, though there are restrictions. Consult your physician about which vaccine is best for you.

GET YOUR OWN UTENSILS

Sure, sharing is nice — most of the time. The exceptions include straws, utensils, cups, food and anything else that could transfer germs from mouth to mouth. Not only is that a good way to get a virus, but sharing these items also makes it easy for cavity-causing bacteria to travel from tooth to tooth. Play it safe: Don't share.

GET GOOD HYGIENE

OK, you probably already have good hygiene, but cold and flu season is the perfect time to step it up. Wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially if it's been awhile since you've scrubbed your hands. If you aren't near running water, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Continue to brush your teeth twice a day, floss at least once a day to help remove bacteria between the teeth, and consider using an antibacterial mouthwash if you aren't already — it can help diminish some of the bacteria in the mouth.

GET SOME TLC

Take care of yourself! It seems obvious, but with all of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, it's easy to rely on unhealthy food, stay up too late or forget to refill your water bottle. To keep sniffles and sneezes at bay, make sure you're sleeping enough, eating healthy foods, getting some physical activity and drinking lots of fluids. A little bit of stress is normal (and healthy), but try to avoid high-stress situations and take a few deep breaths from time to time.

Call in, don't clock in. Stay home from work when you're sick. It's healthier for you *and* your co-workers.



GIVE THE GIFT OF GREAT ORAL HEALTH

10 SMILE-ENHANCING IDEAS

It may be tradition to stuff stockings with candy and sweet treats, but it's not much of a gift for your loved ones' teeth. We've rounded up 10 great gift ideas that are fun and cavity-free.



1. GO "GOURMET." You've probably seen those novelty floss and toothpaste flavors: cupcake, bacon, pickle, even salad. The eyebrow-raising toothpaste flavors are typically not fluoridated (and therefore not approved by the American Dental Association), so they're not meant for everyday use. There's no harm, however, in a taste test!

2. UPGRADE TO ELECTRIC. Electric toothbrushes are more than just "nice to have." They can actually be more effective than manual brushes and are particularly useful for seniors with arthritis or people with physical disabilities that make it difficult to wield manual toothbrushes.

3. BRIGHTEN THEIR DAYS. Know someone who wouldn't mind a megawatt grin? Consider over-the-counter whitening strips as bright stocking stuffers. Include a note to make sure the recipient knows to consult his or her dentist before starting a new whitening routine.

4. CHEW AWAY. You don't have to eliminate all sweet treats from your gift-giving arsenal. Throw in a few packs of chewing gum containing the ingredient xylitol to help suppress the bacteria that cause tooth decay. If xylitol gum is not available, sugar-free gum is a good alternative — and also increases saliva flow to help wash food debris from teeth.

5. SWEETS, MINUS THE SUGAR. Similarly, a few pieces of sugar-free candy will keep the fun factor high but the possibility of cavities low. Don't overdo it, though. High levels of sorbitol, a substance often found in sugar-free items, can lead to an upset stomach.

6. PRESENTS FOR THE PICK-Y. Floss picks are great for travel purposes, for kids learning how to floss or for people with limited dexterity. Bonus: They come in lots of fun colors.

7. WIND IT UP. Wind-up chattering teeth have graced toy store shelves since 1949. Bestow one upon someone who appreciates nostalgia — or introduce a new generation to an old classic.

8. HOLD IT UP. Who says toothbrushes have to be stored in plain plastic cups? From a lobster clutching toothbrushes in its claws to tiny tree branches that keep them standing, there are tons of fun ways to keep toothbrushes organized. Just make sure the holder allows for upright storage and that the toothbrushes don't touch to prevent germs from spreading.

9. ROLL IT UP. A thoughtful gift for the frugal person in your life is a toothpaste clamp or two. Clamps fit on the end of the tube and help get out every last drop. You can get a plain-Jane one for the utilitarian-minded person in your life, or a cute, animal-shape clamp for the young or young at heart.

10. INSURE THE FUTURE. Unfortunately, not everyone has the dental coverage they want or need. If someone you know falls under this category, consider gifting them a Delta Dental individual plan. It's an especially thoughtful way to get grandkids or other children in your life on the road to a lifetime of good oral health.



5 five things you should know about your toothbrush



If you brush the recommended amount — twice daily for at least two minutes per session — then you've spent a lot of quality time with your toothbrushes over the years. But how much do you really know about your toothbrush? Here are five quick facts to bring you up to speed.

- 1** Opt for soft bristles over hard ones unless otherwise instructed by your dentist. Soft bristles are more pliable and can get between teeth easier. Hard bristles can make brushing painful and may also wear away gums and tooth enamel.
- 2** If you were still enjoying the warm summer weather the last time you replaced your toothbrush, you're definitely overdue for a new one. **Toothbrushes need to be replaced when they get frayed and worn, which is typically every three months.** Particularly vigorous brushers will probably need to replace them more frequently (and should try to be gentler with brushing to avoid damaging gums and tooth enamel).
- 3** It may be tempting for teething tots, but **don't let young children chew on toothbrush heads.** It drastically shortens the life of the bristles.
- 4** To maximize the effectiveness of brushing, **pick up your toothbrush right after a meal.** It helps remove the food debris that bacteria feed on while giving teeth a dose of fluoride right when they need it most.
- 5** **Bedtime brushing = better ZZZZs.** Repeating a relaxing bedtime routine (including brushing your teeth, of course) eventually gets your body programmed to start winding down when you start the routine.

A 30-year-old who has met the twice-a-day, two-minutes-per-session recommendation since the age of two has spent about **28 days brushing over his or her lifetime.**

LIBERATING LIBATIONS



Four drinks you can enjoy guilt-free this holiday season

'Tis the season for dinners, cocktail hours, formal celebrations and impromptu gatherings. That's a lot of opportunities to sip on sugary beverages that your teeth won't find so sweet. When you're faced with yet another tray of liquid guilty pleasures, try one of these festive but guilt-free substitutes.

Instead of hot chocolate with marshmallows...

Try warming up with sugar-free hot cocoa with a minty kick (see our recipe on Page 5). Bonus: Make your drink with milk instead of water for a boost of calcium.



Instead of red wine...

Try white wine. Red wine is good for your heart, but too much over a period of time will stain your teeth. Switch it up with white wine on occasion. If you really love red, try to wipe your teeth with a tissue or swish with water when your glass is empty.

Instead of punch...

Try club soda or seltzer water. Punch is usually loaded with sugar or juice, which contains a lot of natural sugar. Club soda or seltzer water can taste just as good, especially if you add a sugar-free flavor packet to perk up your taste buds.

Instead of the usual eggnog...

Try a lighter version by using low-fat milk instead of whole milk or cream. Use more egg whites and fewer egg yolks, and cut some of the sugar to taste.

If you can't make the swap or simply want to indulge, try to enjoy your beverage with a meal. Eating while you're drinking will help keep sugars from clinging to teeth, keeping damage to a minimum until you can sneak away to brush. Forgot your toothbrush? Swishing with water will help rinse off the stuff that creates stains and decay.

brushing up



Ever wonder what your dentist is *really* thinking? *Grin!* wanted to find out too, so we talked to **Dr. Tim Wilson** from Affiliated Pediatric Dentistry in Arizona.

Do you have a favorite floss flavor?

My favorite floss flavor is bacon. You can get it on the Internet. To be clear, if you do not have bacon-flavored floss, it is not acceptable to floss with bacon.

What's the best dental advice you've ever received?

Actually, the best advice I have ever received applies to life and not just dentistry: "Treat others the way you would want to be treated." I think it is just as important to point out and congratulate dental successes as it is to point out areas needing improvement.

In your opinion, which celebrity has the best smile?

SpongeBob. How can you not look at him and think "dentistry"? Disney's Princess Tiana has a nice smile, but since she gets turned into a frog and frogs don't have teeth, SpongeBob wins by default.

Do you brush and floss as much as you recommend?

On advice of my attorney, I plead the Fifth. My family just got some water picks to make floss time more fun. Wish me luck. We try to do good ... we try.

What advice do you give your patients?

I try to give parents the information they need to create healthy environments for their children. I share my own family failures and successes with them. Most parents want me to remind their children that mom and dad still need to help get the germs from those hard-to-reach spots. I am often reaffirming to the patients that their parents are not evil creatures determined to embarrass them at school and that their continued nagging to brush and floss is really in their (the patient's) best interest.

If you'd like to recommend your dentist for a Brushing Up interview, email grin@deltadental.com with his or her name and contact information.

Keeping You Covered — dental insurance lingo, decoded

Does your dental insurance Explanation of Benefits sometimes seem as if it's written in a foreign language? Let us help you decipher some of those terms.

Out-of-Network

Any dentist who has not contractually agreed to provide treatment according to Delta Dental's guidelines. A subscriber will typically have to pay more out-of-pocket costs when visiting an out-of-network dentist.

Out-of-Pocket

The portion of dental fees the subscriber pays. It may include a copayment, a deductible, any amount over the plan's maximum and services not covered by the plan.

Coinsurance

Many insurance plans have coinsurance provisions. That means the benefit plan pays a pre-determined percentage of the cost of your treatment, and you are responsible for paying the balance. What you pay is called the coinsurance, and it is part of your out-of-pocket cost. It is paid even after a deductible is reached.