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IT'S SLEDDING SEASON

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS:
Why dentists reshape teeth

Avoiding unexpected
WINTER RISKS

in this issue of grin!



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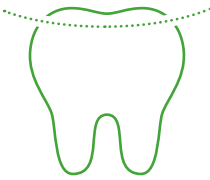
Little known facts and misconceptions:
WHY DENTISTS
RESHAPE TEETH



Ever wonder how a dentist gets a crown or filling to fit just right? Or what happens if your mouth is too small for your teeth? In some cases, tooth reshaping can be the answer.

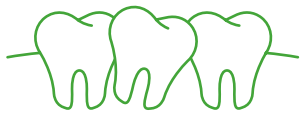
Tooth reshaping, also called enameloplasty, odontoplasty, tooth contouring, or tooth shaving — is when a dentist carefully removes a very small amount of enamel to change the size, shape, or surface of a tooth.

Only a licensed dentist should ever reshape teeth! DIY “tooth shaving” trends — like those you might see on social media — will likely permanently damage your enamel — and enamel doesn’t grow back. Weakened enamel can lead to tooth sensitivity, increased risk for cavities, and even harm to your tooth’s nerve.



The truth about reshaping teeth
While the idea of “shaping” or “shaving” teeth might sound extreme, in skilled hands it’s a precise, sometimes necessary procedure that can improve both the look and function of your smile.

Dentists may recommend reshaping for several reasons:



Improved alignment
Slightly adjusting tooth size can help teeth fit together more comfortably, improving your bite.



Space for orthodontics
In some cases of crowding, removing even a sliver of enamel can make room for braces or aligners to work more effectively.



Fitting crowns or veneers
Teeth sometimes need gentle reshaping so restorations fit securely and look natural.



Smoothing chips or uneven edges
Minor cosmetic flaws or chips on a tooth’s edge can be polished away to prevent small cuts on your cheeks and tongue or to boost self-confidence.

Because enamel doesn’t grow back, this procedure must be done with extreme care. Dentists use specialized tools to remove less than a fraction of a millimeter at a time. This preserves the strength of your tooth after it is reshaped.



When precision meets smile protection
Tooth reshaping is a small change that can make a big difference — when it’s done safely. If you’re curious whether it’s right for you, discuss options with your dentist and ask for a pre-treatment estimate to see what is covered by your benefits plan.



5 ways to
WARM UP THIS WINTER

When the temperature drops, finding ways to stay cozy can also boost your oral, vision, and overall health. Here are five winter warm-ups that feel good and do good for your body.



MOVE YOUR BODY INDOORS

At-home workouts like yoga, bodyweight exercises, or dance get your blood pumping. They also support eye health by increasing blood circulation to your retina and optic nerve. Regular exercise can lower inflammation, reducing your risk for gum disease, and help manage blood sugar, which supports oral health.



SIP COFFEE OR COCOA MINDFULLY

A warm mug of coffee or cocoa can make a crisp winter day feel cozier. But in this case, all that deliciousness comes with some risk:

- Coffee's acidity can weaken enamel over time. You also need to watch out for sugary sweeteners that will feed mouth bacteria.
- Many types of hot cocoa are high in sugar, so try to find an unsweetened option. However, your teeth will benefit from the calcium and protein in the milk!



SPICE UP YOUR MEALS

Adding chili peppers, curry, or other spices to your food can both raise your body temperature and increase saliva flow. The saliva helps keep your mouth clean by washing down food and harmful bacteria.



COZY UP BY THE FIRE

A fireplace's warm, soothing glow and gentle crackle can reduce stress, which supports your oral health by lowering your risk of teeth grinding and jaw tension. Just make sure the fire is well-ventilated, so the smoke stays out of your eyes and lungs.



RELAX IN A WARM BATH

Soaking in warm water can ease muscle tension, improve circulation, and, just like a fireplace, help you unwind. To make it even healthier:

- Avoid scents and soaps that may irritate your eyes or skin.
- Drink a glass of water after your bath to stay hydrated and prevent dry mouth.



HEAT UP THE HEALTHY WAY

Warming up in the winter is often about comfort, but it can be good for your oral and overall health, too! Choose activities that support multiple areas of your well-being to stay cozy and smiling all season.

INGREDIENT SPOTLIGHT



Be friends with fennel

Fennel is underused in many kitchens — but it shouldn't be! With big nutritional benefits and a crisp, delightful aroma that warms your home in the winter, eating more fennel is a great way to support your oral, vision, and overall health. Just a few standout benefits include:



Fiber to support gut health and help prevent dry mouth.



Vitamin C to reduce inflammation linked to gum disease and chronic conditions.



Vitamin A to protect your vision and reduce your risk for age-related eye disorders.



MOUTH-FRIENDLY RECIPE



Tomato and fennel salad

Refreshing and packed with flavor, this winter fennel salad is more than just a side — it also supports your smile with calcium and provides fiber to help you feel full.

INGREDIENTS:

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon white-wine vinegar
½ teaspoon salt
1 pound of tomatoes
2 cups fennel bulb
¼ cup parsley
⅓ cup toasted pine nuts
Freshly ground black pepper (to taste)

DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Cut the tomatoes into wedges.
- 2 Thinly slice the fennel bulb.
- 3 Chop the parsley.
- 4 In a large bowl, whisk the oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper until combined.
- 5 Add tomatoes, fennel, parsley, and pine nuts, then toss to coat.



Roasted fennel with garlic and herbs

Golden and caramelized with a savory mix of garlic and herbs, this roasted fennel dish isn't just delicious — it's a flavorful way to nourish your eyes and strengthen your smile.

INGREDIENTS:

1 large fennel bulb
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 small garlic cloves, minced
¼ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon thyme
¼ - ½ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded

DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Preheat oven to 400°F.
- 2 Cut the fennel bulb into 1-inch slices and place them on a baking sheet covered in parchment paper.
- 3 In a bowl, mix the olive oil and garlic, and brush it over the fennel.
- 4 Sprinkle the thyme, salt, and black pepper on top of the fennel.
- 5 Bake in the oven for 20 minutes.
- 6 Sprinkle the Parmesan cheese on top and bake for another 10 minutes.

AVOIDING UNEXPECTED WINTER RISKS



Whether you love or hate the crisp winter weather, there's no doubt that it changes the way our bodies — and even our dental work — react to the environment.

Cold, dry air and bright, reflective surfaces can influence your mouth and eye health in ways you might not realize until discomfort sets in. Knowing the risks before they sneak up on you helps keep both your smile and your sight healthy all season long.



DRY AIR, DRY MOUTH, DRY EYES

Dry winter air can reduce saliva production and cause dry mouth, which raises your risk for cavities, gum irritation, and bad breath. The same dry air can also cause dry eyes, leaving them itchy, irritated, or watery.

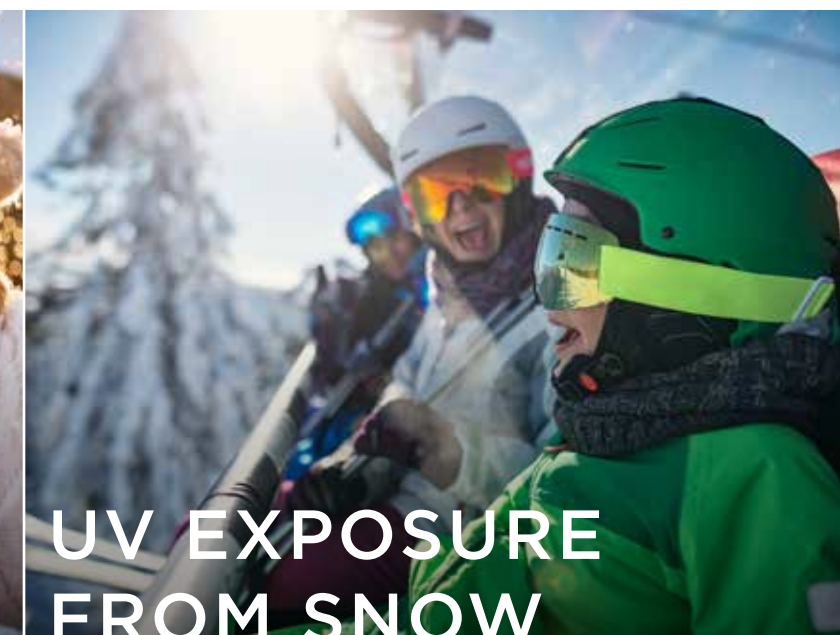
? What helps: Use a humidifier to add moisture to indoor air, sip water throughout the day, and chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva. For vision, using eye drops and taking frequent breaks from screens can help reduce discomfort.



COLD WEATHER AND TOOTH SENSITIVITY

If you have braces or other orthodontic appliances, you might notice more sensitivity in winter. Cold air can make your tooth enamel (the hard outer layer of your teeth) expand and contract slightly, causing tooth sensitivity.

? What helps: Breathe through your nose outdoors and wear a scarf over your mouth to protect your dental appliance from the weather. If you notice sensitivity, avoid very hot and cold foods until it subsides.



UV EXPOSURE FROM SNOW

Snow and ice can reflect up to 80% of the sun's UV rays and cause photokeratitis, which is like a temporary sunburn on your eye.

? What helps: Wear sunglasses or goggles with 100% UVA/UVB protection, even on cloudy days.



SEASONAL ILLNESS SIDE EFFECTS

Cold and flu medications, especially decongestants, can cause dry mouth — and mouth breathing from congestion only makes the problem worse.

What helps: Stay hydrated, use sugar-free lozenges to protect your tooth enamel from sugar, and talk to your dentist if dryness persists.



CHAPPED LIPS AND SKIN AROUND THE MOUTH

Wind and cold can crack lips and irritate skin, making eating and speaking uncomfortable.

What helps: Apply a lip balm with at least SPF 30 before heading outside and avoid licking your lips, which can worsen dryness.



Winter wellness in action

By using a humidifier to add moisture to indoor air, shielding your eyes from glare, and taking small steps to protect your mouth, you can safely sidestep these seasonal hazards. A little preparation means you'll be free to enjoy the best parts of winter without letting the cold weather take a bite out of your health.



A SMILE SUCCESS STORY: The rise of hydration stations

Across the country, more schools, parks, and community spaces are making it easier to choose water over sugary drinks — thanks to the growing number of water bottle refilling stations.

Programs funded and supported by Delta Dental and other community partners are helping to install these stations in schools, libraries, trails, and public areas, giving more people of all ages free access to clean drinking water.



Protecting smiles at school
Instead of buying bottled water or soda, these stations allow students to refill reusable bottles at touch-free stations. These stations are eco-friendly and encourage kids to drink more water during the school day, instead of sugary juices and sodas.



Bringing clean water to local communities
These stations aren't just for classrooms. Many have been added in parks, libraries, and other public spaces, giving families healthier options wherever they go. By making water more accessible, communities are reducing plastic waste and supporting healthier smiles for everyone.



Hydrated communities and healthier smiles
Clean drinking water is one of the simplest, most powerful tools for good health. That's why Delta Dental has been a leader in supporting these efforts, helping students and communities build healthy habits that last a lifetime.

Water, water everywhere — and why that matters

These stations do more than quench thirst, they support better health from head to toe.



For your smile: Water washes away food, sugar, and bacteria that can lead to cavities. It also prevents dry mouth, which can lead to bad breath and increased risk for cavities.



For your vision: Staying hydrated reduces your risk for dry eyes, blurry vision, and eye strain.



For overall health: Drinking enough water supports energy, focus, mood, digestion, circulation, and more.

IT'S SLEDDING SEASON



Fresh snow, cold air, and a good hill can make for a perfect winter day. But while sledding is a seasonal classic, it comes with risks you may or may not expect — including some that can harm your teeth, mouth, and eyes. By following these tips, you can enjoy the ride and avoid an unplanned trip to the dentist or doctor.



Nearly 82% of children treated for sledding injuries hurt their heads.

SLED SMARTER, NOT HARDER

No matter when and where you sled, you'll want to follow a few simple guidelines:



Ride feet-first
This position lowers your risk of head, face, eye, and dental injuries.



Wait for a clear path
Take turns and give the rider ahead plenty of space before starting your run.



Use a safe sled
A steerable sled with brakes will help you avoid hazards. Don't use sleds like snow tubes or disks, which raise the risk of head injury.



Supervise the fun
This is an obvious one, but worth repeating — make sure there is an adult there to keep young kids safe.

WATCH OUT FOR COLLISION HAZARDS

Many injuries happen when sleds crash into fixed objects like trees, rocks, fences, or light poles. These accidents can chip or break teeth, injure jaws, or cause facial fractures. To help avoid these injuries:



Walk the hill first
Check for hidden dangers under the snow.



Pick a good slope
Make sure it doesn't end near a street, parking lot, pond, or fence.



Look for a slope with a wide, clear run out at the bottom
This helps you come to a stop gently.



DRESS FOR SAFETY AND COMFORT

Make sure you're equipped for the weather and the speed:

1

Wear comfortable, insulated layers
Avoid loose clothing or dangling accessories that could snag or get caught under the sled.

2

Wear a well-fitted winter sports or bike helmet
This helps protect your head and face.

3

Shield your eyes
Bring goggles or sunglasses to protect from wind, glare, and snow spray.

4

Use lip balm
It should have at least SPF 30 to protect your lips.



CHOOSE SNOW, NOT ICE

Slick, frozen hills may seem faster, but they make your sled harder to control and are more likely to cause accidents. Snowy surfaces offer better traction for steering and stopping to reduce the risk of injury.

Ready ... set ... sled!
With safe gear, a good sled, and the right hill, you can enjoy winter fun that's friendly to your smile, your sight, and your overall well being.

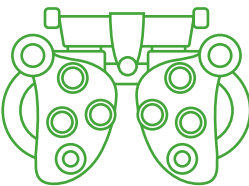


HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF your vision coverage

Even if you don't wear glasses, vision benefits still help you take care of your eyes and your overall health — that's why making the most of them is so important! Here are a few ways to maximize the value of your vision plan.

1

Attend your yearly eye exam — even if you don't need vision correction
Most plans cover a yearly eye exam, which isn't just about your vision. It also helps your optometrist catch problems early to protect your overall health. During the exam, they can detect signs of more than 200 health conditions including glaucoma, cataracts — even diabetes and high blood pressure.



2

Visit an in-network provider to save money
Optometrists within your vision network have agreed to charge reduced rates for many exams, treatments, and procedures. Find an in-network optometrist to save when you need preventive or unexpected care.

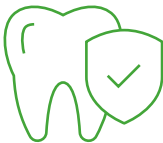


3

Ask about additional discounts
Most plans help pay some of the cost for glasses or contacts. But some plans also provide additional discounts for prescription sunglasses and lens enhancements like blue light lenses or UV protection. You might even be able to save on vision correction procedures like LASIK or PRK. Review your plan for full details.



Don't forget, dental coverage is important too. Just like your eyes, your teeth and gums show signs of overall health issues, including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease — so regular dental checkups are key.



4

Get the benefits of your benefits
Your vision and dental plans are designed to help you stay healthy from head to toe. Use them each year to keep your eyes sharp, your smile strong, and your body feeling its best.



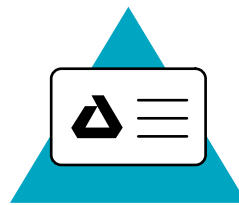
The State of America's Oral Health and Wellness

Why do adults value dental benefits?
For many reasons, including
better oral and overall health!

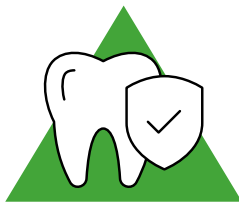
WHY HAVE DENTAL BENEFITS?



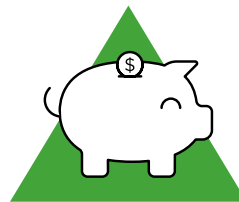
86%
of adults say dental insurance saves them from having unnecessary worry about future dental emergencies.



86%
of adults believe dental insurance is essential for protecting oral and overall health.



85%
of adults believe dental insurance encourages them to practice better oral health habits.



84%
of adults believe that dental insurance helps save money in the long run.

Dental benefits also make adults more likely to seek preventive care. And that's important, because preventive exams and cleanings allow your dentist to catch and treat any issues early — before they become more expensive or painful.



67%
with dental insurance



28%
without dental insurance

LEARN MORE ABOUT U.S. DENTAL CARE TRENDS

Discover how adults care for their teeth — and see how your habits compare — by downloading the full report at
www.deltadental.com/us/en/state-of-americas-oral-health-report.html