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**ENGAGE YOUR
SENSES**
and enjoy the
great outdoors

**HOW DO YOU CARE
FOR YOUR TEETH**
throughout the day?

**THE UNEXPECTED
BENEFITS**
of brushing

Say "Shh" to your
**CRAVINGS
FOR SUGAR**

spring 2023

in this issue of grin!



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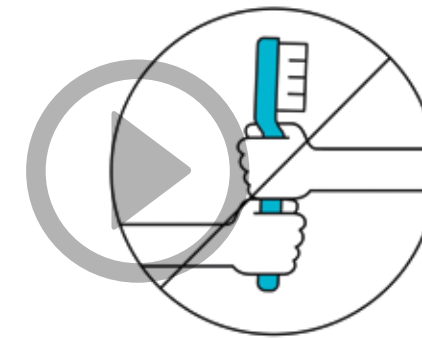
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grin! more

Visit the *Grin!* website for more ways to keep your smile healthy. View web-exclusive content, videos, and more!

NEVER share.



WELLNESS + NUTRITION Caring for your toothbrush

Your trusty toothbrush is a vital ally in the fight against plaque and tartar — but only if you take proper care of it. Take a look at these best practices for brush maintenance.



NEWS + RESEARCH Glaucoma and your oral health: Is there a link?

Glaucoma — an eye disease that can lead to blindness — is more common than you might think. Learn more about a possible connection between glaucoma and your oral health.



Looking for reasons to smile?

Access the digital version anytime at grinmag.com or by scanning the QR code.



ON TOPIC WITH DR. DILL

The unexpected benefits of brushing

Joseph Dill, DDS, is Delta Dental's Chief Dental Officer. With more than 30 years of experience in the dental field, including eight in private and public health practice and 20 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

Brushing your teeth reduces oral bacteria. This removes plaque and prevents both tooth decay and gum disease (periodontitis). By brushing and avoiding the inflammation caused by gum disease, you can create big benefits for your oral and overall health.



Improve mouth health
Brushing reduces bacteria that will help eliminate plaque, reduce tooth decay, prevent gum disease, and improve bad breath.



Combat pneumonia and respiratory problems
If you have respiratory or immune system issues, bacteria from your mouth can be pulled into your lungs and create health risks.



Lower risk for heart disease
More research is needed to understand the connection, but certain studies link heart disease and stroke to the inflammation and oral bacteria from gum disease.



Support a healthy pregnancy
Periodontitis has been associated with premature birth and low birth weight.



Reduced complications from diabetes
Brushing helps those with diabetes control blood sugar levels, lowering their risk of cavities and tooth loss from gum disease.

What is a healthy brushing routine?

Brushing your teeth is always a benefit, but you'll maximize plaque removal and the protective power of fluoride by using the right technique.

- Brush at least twice a day for two minutes each time. Make sure to brush the entire surface of each tooth.
- Adults should use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Angle the bristles toward your gum line to reach between your gums and your teeth.
- Spit out excess toothpaste. Wait 30 minutes before rinsing your mouth so you don't wash out the fluoride.
- Rinse off your toothbrush and store it upright in a clean, dry place.
- Replace your toothbrush or toothbrush head every three to four months or sooner if it looks frayed.

Brushing does far more than clean your teeth. To improve your oral and overall health, stick to your daily oral health routine and don't miss appointments with your dentist.

MOUTH-FRIENDLY RECIPE

Sweet potato hash

Try a new sweet for breakfast — sweet potatoes! Unlike sugary cereals or pastries, sweet potatoes are a healthier alternative that won't zap your energy before noon. Easy to make in one skillet, this sweet yet savory breakfast hash is chock-full of smile-friendly vitamins and nutrients that satisfy well past breakfast. Now that's a great start to a great day!

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups sweet potatoes, cubed
- 1 medium red onion, chopped
- 1 cup turkey bacon, crumbled
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 4 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon shredded cheddar cheese, for topping
- 1 tablespoon green onion, for garnish

Directions:

- 1 Preheat oven to Broil.
- 2 Heat olive oil over medium heat in an ovenproof skillet.
- 3 Add sweet potatoes and onion; cook for 7 minutes.
- 4 Add turkey bacon, cumin, salt, and pepper. Cook for an additional 7 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 5 Crack the eggs, evenly spaced out, on top of the hash, then place the skillet in the oven and broil until the eggs are cooked as desired.
- 6 Sprinkle with cheddar cheese and garnish with green onions.



HEALTHY HIGHLIGHTS

- Sweet potatoes** are rich in vitamin A for healthy gums.
- Eggs** are full of protein, which helps regulate blood sugar levels.
- Green onions** have antibacterial properties to kill bacteria in the mouth.

Explaining alternative toothpaste options

Hydroxyapatite, organic, and charcoal — oh, my! When did toothpaste get so complicated? Shopping for a new tube now involves evaluating a variety of options. But which choice is right for you? Should you stick with tried-and-true fluoride toothpaste or switch to something new? Let's review a few trending options.



Traditional fluoride toothpaste

Most toothpastes fall under this category. Which is good, because fluoride should be considered an essential ingredient! Using a fluoride toothpaste creates big benefits for your oral health, including:

- Stronger enamel
- Reduced bacteria
- Decreased cavity risk
- Reversing early stages of tooth decay



Organic and natural toothpastes

As whole, unprocessed food options become more popular, so, too, have organic and all-natural toothpastes. That means toothpastes that don't include any preservatives, additives, artificial sweeteners or colors, or synthetic flavors and fragrances.

The main thing to consider with organic and natural options is that they may not include fluoride, which is necessary to strengthen tooth enamel and battle tooth decay.



Hydroxyapatite toothpaste

Hydroxyapatite toothpaste is a newer product and a potential alternative to fluoride that may also protect and help remineralize your tooth enamel, but more research is needed. Fluoride remains an essential ingredient to look for in a toothpaste, though. At this time, fluoride is required in a toothpaste to receive the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance or to receive Food and Drug Administration clearance as an anticavity toothpaste.



Charcoal toothpaste

These toothpastes are often used in an attempt to whiten teeth, but they are actually not safe for everyday use. This is due to two big downsides to this choice:

- 1 Charcoal can be abrasive and wear down your enamel, which can cause your teeth to appear darker over time.
- 2 Most charcoal toothpastes don't contain fluoride.



Toothpaste tablets

These travel-friendly tablets naturally break down in your mouth when mixed with water or saliva. Then, you brush as normal. If you're interested, talk to your dentist to ensure that you use a brand with enough fluoride.



What's the right choice?

The truth is that it depends on your preferences and personal oral health. Toothpaste with fluoride should be your first priority and is key to preventing cavities and keeping your smile healthy and clean. Before switching to an alternative option, speak with your dentist about what's best for your smile and oral health.

Readers ask, we answer

Tom asks:
"What are tonsil stones?"



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

Tonsil stones (or tonsilloliths) are hard, white, or yellow lumps that form on your tonsils. They look, as you might guess, like little pebbles. More of a nuisance than a true health risk, tonsil stones can cause bad-smelling breath and are typically treated at home.

How do stones form in my tonsils?

Tonsil stones are created when food, bacteria, minerals such as calcium, and other debris, like dead cells and mucus, get stuck in the small pockets in your tonsils (known as tonsillar crypts). When the debris hardens, tonsil stones form. This occurs most often in people who have long-term inflammation or multiple cases of tonsillitis.

How will I know if tonsil stones are forming?

Your dentist may diagnose them during a routine exam, but tonsil stones may not cause noticeable symptoms for you to detect at home. If the stones do cause problems, typical warning signs include bad breath, ear pain, and throat irritations — soreness, trouble swallowing, coughing, and tonsil swelling.


What can I do to prevent tonsil stones?


The best way to prevent tonsil stones is to consistently maintain a clean mouth, including your teeth and gums. Here are a few guidelines to follow:


- Brush twice each day with fluoride toothpaste, floss, and visit your dentist for preventive care.
- Gargling after meals can remove any further food buildup.

How are tonsil stones removed?

If you have tonsil stones, consult your physician. They will assess the severity of your stones and provide treatment options, including:

 **At-home removal:** In most cases, tonsil stones can be removed by gargling with warm, salty water or by dislodging with a water pick or swab. *Note: Do not use your finger or a toothbrush, as you may scratch your tonsils and cause an infection.*

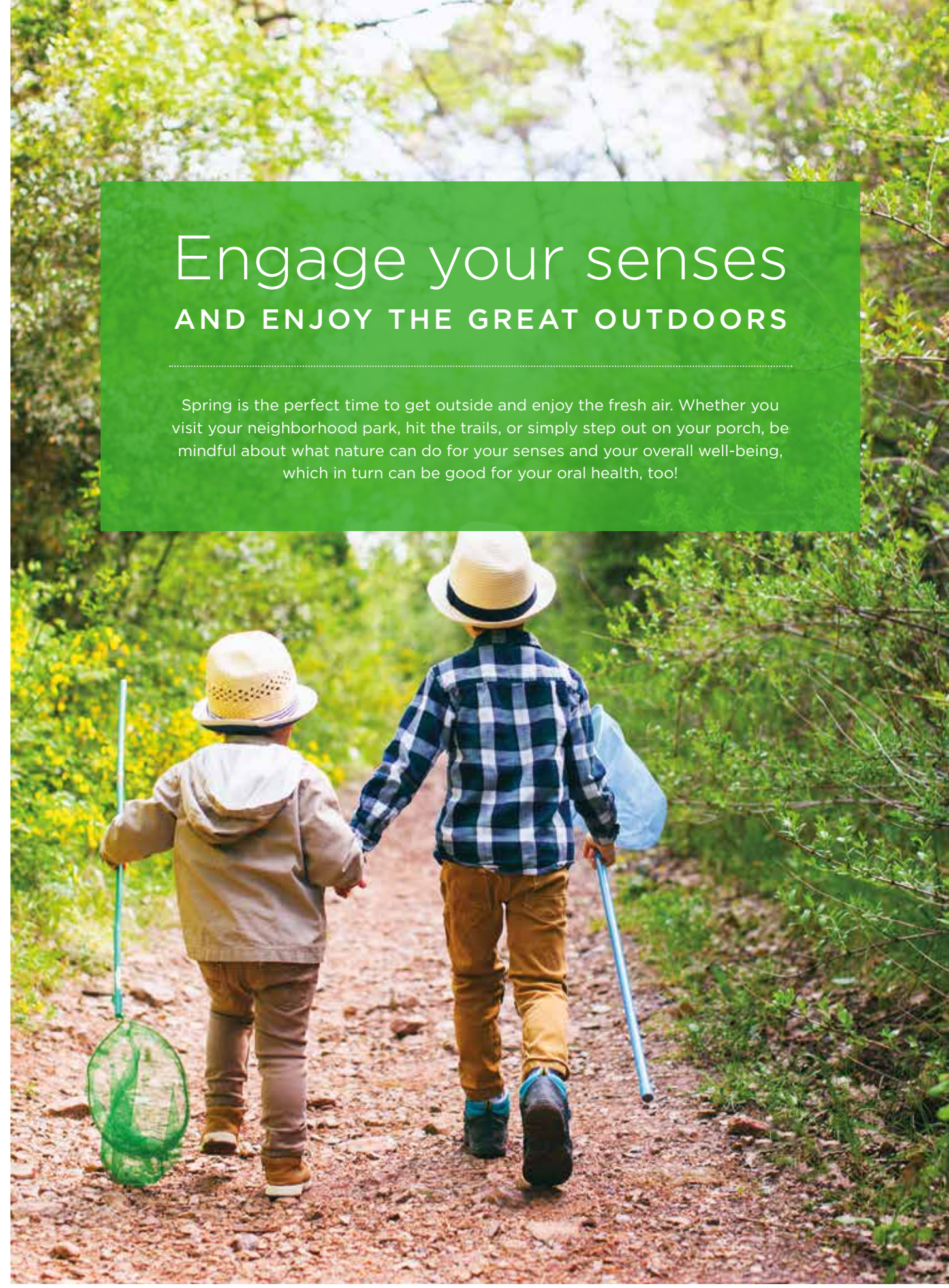
 **Antibiotics:** These are not necessary in most cases, as they do not treat the underlying cause of tonsil stones. Your physician may prescribe them if you develop a bacterial infection.

 **Surgery:** In rare cases, tonsil stones may require surgery. Your physician can refer you to an ear, nose, and throat specialist, who will help you navigate your options.

While tonsil stones rarely cause long-term harm, you'll want to avoid the irritation they can cause when left untreated. Stick to your oral health routine to stay stone free!

Engage your senses AND ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Spring is the perfect time to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Whether you visit your neighborhood park, hit the trails, or simply step out on your porch, be mindful about what nature can do for your senses and your overall well-being, which in turn can be good for your oral health, too!



Hearing

Listen to spring come to life. The birds are chirping loudly in the morning and fluttering back and forth to their nests to care for their newly hatched babies. Getting out into the sunlight shortly after you wake provides energy and focus for the day. It also boosts your vitamin D levels, which help absorb tooth-fortifying calcium. You know what they say about the early bird!



Sight

Wander and let the scenic path unfold in front of you. Nature presents scenes that gently capture your attention and calm your nerves. As you stroll, be mindful of what you see. Acknowledge five things in your line of sight to help ground you. It could be a patch of moss, a small puddle, or a squirrel running up a tree. Notice how this simple exercise keeps you present in the moment and alleviates stress. Being calm helps with several oral health issues, including teeth grinding. Be mindful of your posture. With each step, work to improve your posture, which in turn can reduce the potential for jaw pain.



Smell

Walk around your neighborhood and sniff out the fresh blooms. Whether it's cherry blossoms or tulips, stop for a minute to smell the flowers — literally! Stand still, close your eyes, and breathe in. Let the sweet scents fill you up with each breath. As you exhale, lower your shoulders away from your ears and unclench your jaw. You'll feel your stress level slowly deflate, which can help reduce teeth grinding.

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Taste

Take your lunch away from your desk and decompress outside. We typically reach for sugary and starchy foods when stressed, so walk away from the sweets and treat yourself to a picnic for one. Pack your basket with smile-friendly snacks, like fresh strawberries and carrots. As you enjoy your lunch, slow down and practice mindful eating to help increase the awareness of how your food actually tastes. Savor each bite.



Touch

Get out into your (or a community) garden and dig in the dirt. Feel the warm soil slide through your fingers and notice how the different textures of the plants feel, like the smooth leaves of baby spinach or rough skin of sweet potatoes. Spring is the perfect time to prep your garden for fresh veggies like these that are good for your oral health!

Being outdoors provides plenty of opportunities to engage all five senses! So, grab your favorite SPF lip balm, apply sunscreen, and enjoy your adventure — no matter how big or small.

How do you care for your teeth throughout the day?



1

Do you brush in the morning?

- A I brush first thing — bye-bye, morning breath. (3 points)
- B It depends on the day, but I try to remember. (2 points)
- C Brush? My teeth? In the morning? (1 point)

TOOTH-FRIENDLY TIP: Plaque and bacteria multiply while you sleep. Brush every morning to send them packing!



2

How do you finish your brushing session?

- A I spit but don't rinse out my mouth with water for 30 minutes. (3 points)
- B I spit and rinse right away. (2 points)
- C I spit and rinse, and have a donut. (1 point)

TOOTH-FRIENDLY TIP: To help fluoride protect your teeth, try to wait at least 30 minutes before rinsing, eating, or drinking after you brush.



3

How much sugar do you usually consume?

- A I read food labels and stay below the recommended daily allowance. (3 points)
- B I don't track it, but I try to limit sweets. (2 points)
- C I enjoy sweet treats throughout the day. (1 point)

TOOTH-FRIENDLY TIP: You can reduce cavity risk by eating sweets at mealtime so your saliva will help wash the sugar away.



4

Do you snack after your evening brush?

- A I never eat after my evening brush and floss. (3 points)
- B Sometimes I have a quick bite before bed. (2 points)
- C I'm a notorious midnight snacker. (1 point)

TOOTH-FRIENDLY TIP: Eating at night is associated with tooth loss and periodontal disease. Try to limit snacking after your evening brush.



5

What is your go-to drink during the day?

- A Mostly just water or infused water. (3 points)
- B Carbonated water is my favorite. (2 points)
- C High-sugar energy drinks and soda. (1 point)

TOOTH-FRIENDLY TIP: Limit sugary and acidic carbonated beverages — including carbonated water — to protect your smile.

Total your points and see how well you care for your teeth during the day.

12-15 POINTS Way to go! You're doing a great job caring for your oral health on a daily basis.

10-11 POINTS You take steps to safeguard your smile during the day, but there's still some room for improvement.

5-9 POINTS You may want to alter your daily routine to protect yourself from cavities and tooth wear.

Find a healthy daily routine that works for you! The benefits of better oral health will keep you smiling.

Say “Shh” TO YOUR CRAVINGS FOR



There are many reasons to crave sugar. Sometimes you’ve had a stressful day and need a pick-me-up, other days you have a big accomplishment to celebrate. Maybe you’re at a work gathering with great catering, or you have family in town and Grandma made her secret cookie recipe.

But the urge to reach for sweet treats and comfort foods isn’t all mental — our bodies are physically programmed to like sugar. Eating something sweet causes our bodies to produce happy hormones.



Stimulates serotonin, the brain’s feel-good chemical



Triggers the release of endorphins, which help us feel calm

Despite this immediate rush of good feelings, it’s important to not overindulge on a regular basis. Excess sugar is harmful to your oral health and your overall health, and can contribute to plaque and tartar buildup, tooth decay, gum disease, and other problems, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Dietary needs vary from person to person, but general health guidelines set the recommended daily allowance for added-sugar intake at:¹

 **36 grams**
FOR MEN

 **25 grams**
FOR WOMEN

Give your cravings the cold shoulder

Limiting sugary snacks and desserts can be tricky, and delicious food is a great part of life — but there are ways to satisfy your sweet tooth and still enjoy a healthy diet. Try these strategies and see what helps you avoid the urge to overindulge.



Read food labels

Knowing the nutrition content of what you eat will help you stock your pantry with healthier choices, and knowing portion sizes can help you avoid accidental sugar splurges.

Start the day right

Eat a healthy, well-balanced breakfast (like our sweet potato hash recipe on page 5). Consuming too much added sugar early can trigger cravings later in the day.



Find healthy substitutions

Eat fruit instead of fruit candy, for instance, or make an all-natural fruit smoothie instead of ice cream.

Clean out your cupboards and freezer

You can’t snack on candy during work or pop the top off some ice cream after supper if you don’t keep any of those foods in stock.



Don’t get too hungry

Saying “no thanks” to sugar is a lot harder when your stomach is empty. Eat nutritious meals and small, healthy snacks to keep cravings at bay.

Find food-free ways to relieve stress

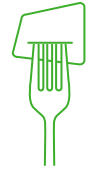
It’s natural to reach for comfort food when you have a hard day. Instead of food, try boosting your mood with friends, a walk, or a favorite movie or book.



¹American Health Association

Continued from page 13

Want a sugary treat?



Try savoring every bite of a smaller snack instead of consuming too much sugar in one sitting.



Eat sugary foods at mealtime when your saliva will help wash away the bacteria.



Don't let one treat start a sugar splurge — just satisfy your sweet tooth and move on.

Some of these methods may feel right and some may not. But experimenting with these and other methods will reveal what works for you and help you have a healthy relationship with sugar.



Better moods and better health? That's pretty sweet.

In addition to long-term risks such as cavities, tooth decay, diabetes, and obesity, excess sugar can also cause short-term problems. Too many sweets can cause your glucose levels to spike and then plummet, which leads to mood swings, fatigue, and headaches. Learn to manage your daily sugar cravings for a healthier and happier smile!

Your SPRING smile list



- 1 Wake up your senses by getting outside. Find some inspiration on page 8.
- 2 Fuel your day from the start with a hearty breakfast. See our recipe on page 5.
- 3 Add fresh flowers to a vase for a pop of color.
- 4 Make a simple bird feeder and watch who flies in.
- 5 Find a frisbee and give it a toss.

- 6 Snap photos of nature coming back to life.
- 7 Paint pots for your plants.
- 8 Host a first-day-of-spring gathering with friends.
- 9 Make some time for yourself with a midday break to stretch and take a few deep breaths.
- 10 Go green and take items to a recycling center.



////////// DENTAL TREND SPOTLIGHT //////////

The benefits and downsides of greens powders

Here's a question that might take you back to childhood — are you eating your fruits and vegetables? If you are, you're one of the few. Just 12% of U.S. adults eat the recommended amount of fruit each day, and only 10% meet their daily vegetable target.¹

That's one reason why greens powder, a mix of dried fruits and vegetables, has become a popular way for many to supplement a healthy diet and consume more vitamins and minerals. But what nutrition does it provide? Is it safe to use? Let's find out.

What is in greens powder?

Greens powder, a mix of dried fruits and vegetables, is a dietary supplement that is often mixed into water, smoothies, or juices.

- While ingredients vary by brand, it often includes leafy greens and seaweed, antioxidant-rich fruits, probiotics, and more.
- The powder is usually vegan, organic, and not genetically modified.



The good: Potential benefits

When used in addition to a healthy diet, greens powder can be a good source of nutrients that promote oral health. This includes calcium, which strengthens your teeth's enamel, and vitamin A, which helps develop healthy teeth and gums.

The boost of extra vitamins and antioxidants can also contribute to potential overall health benefits:

- Healthy blood pressure
- Immune system support
- Improved eye health
- Prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease



The less-good: Potential risks

When you dry and process fruits and vegetables, some important nutritional content (like fiber) is lost in the powdering process. This means that greens powders cannot fully replace the nutritional benefits you get from consuming whole foods.

Other vitamin supplements and prescription medications can interact with greens powders by providing too much of one or more vitamins — another reason to check with your doctor before you alter your diet.

Our verdict: Before you try greens powders, speak with your physician. Ask whether greens powders are a good supplement for you, what to look for in greens powders, and how they may interact with your medications.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

New job, new choices: oral health benefits after a big change

A new job can create a lot of change — and that could include your dental benefits. Understanding and updating benefits doesn't have to be challenging. This guide can make navigating your dental benefit options a little easier.



Let's back up a second: Why dental benefits?

If you're reassessing your benefits, you may wonder if dental benefits should be a high priority. The answer is yes! That's because having dental benefits will make you more likely to visit the dentist. Good oral health is essential to good overall health and well-being. It's as simple as that!



Your dentist can detect signs of over 120 diseases while examining your mouth.



Regular dental checkups help you detect and then treat dental problems before they become more complex and costly.



Prolonged oral health issues could cause you to miss work.



Dental checkups are usually covered at 100% by most dental plans, so you can get the regular care you need.

What you need to consider with a job change

The specifics will vary based on your personal situation, but here are things to keep in mind as you reassess your dental benefits:

- Compare benefits from your former and new employer, including checking if your preferred dentist is still in network.
- Ask your new employer any questions you have about your benefits (such as if there is a waiting period before coverage begins).
- Consider the specific health needs of each family member, what services are covered, and the annual maximums and deductibles to ensure it aligns with your budget.
- If you're unemployed or looking for coverage that your employer doesn't provide, you still have options. Dental coverage providers — including Delta Dental — offer individual and family dental plans for you to choose from. Find the right fit for you at deltadental.com.

Knowing you're covered will also give you peace of mind.

ALMOST 9 IN 10

adults agree that coverage provides relief from worry about dental emergencies and **BOOSTS THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THEIR SMILE.¹**

¹Delta Dental Plans Association, The 2022 State of America's Oral health and Wellness Report



5 SAFE ALTERNATIVES to not-so-safe oral health social trends

Wellness and lifestyle fads rise and fall all the time — remember jazzercise or shake weights? Some fads are harmless (like choosing yoga pants over gym shorts), some fads are helpful (like jogging and meditation), and some can cause damage. Here are some harmful fads about oral health that you or your child may see on social media.

NOT-SO-SAFE TREND #1

Mouthwash and toothpaste dispensers

! WHY THIS ISN'T SAFE: This trend sees mouthwash and toothpaste mixed in a clear dispenser, but toothpaste tubes aren't clear for a reason: Because UV rays reduce the effectiveness of the toothpaste over time. Also, mouthwash is more acidic than toothpaste and can damage your teeth with prolonged exposure.

✓ A SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Just clean your teeth the tried-and-true way: Brush twice and floss daily. If you use mouthwash, follow the instructions on the bottle.



NOT-SO-SAFE TREND #2

Closing tooth gaps with rubber bands

! WHY THIS ISN'T SAFE: Shifting your teeth so quickly places pressure on the roots, which then shorten. This can cause pain and tooth loss. In addition, keeping a foreign object in your mouth for so long creates bacteria growth that can cause gum disease.

✓ A SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Speak with your dentist or orthodontist about healthy, safe ways to close any gaps in your teeth.

NOT-SO-SAFE TREND #3

Magic erasers on coffee stains on teeth



! WHY THIS ISN'T SAFE: Magic erasers contain melamine, a very toxic material that can cause nausea, vomiting, and irritability. It will also make your teeth yellower and more sensitive over time because the magic eraser will scrub off your tooth enamel to reveal the yellower layer of dentin below.

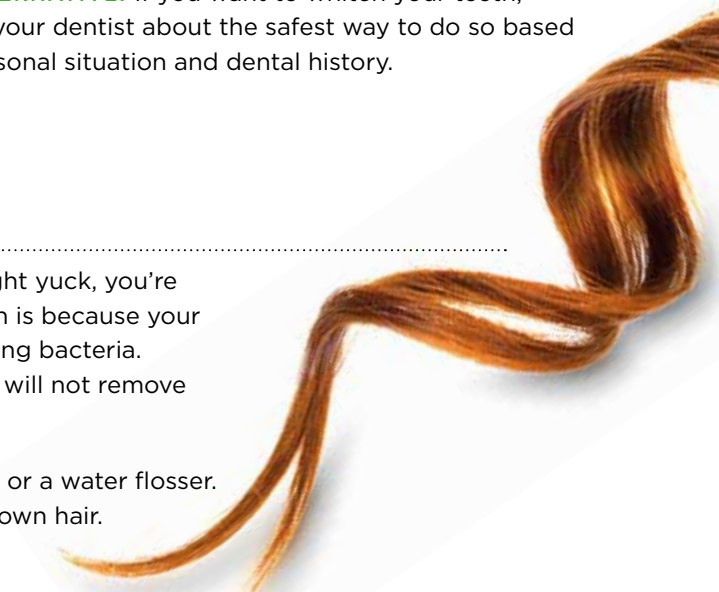
✓ A SAFE ALTERNATIVE: If you want to whiten your teeth, speak with your dentist about the safest way to do so based on your personal situation and dental history.

NOT-SO-SAFE TREND #4

Flossing with your hair

! WHY THIS ISN'T SAFE: If you read that headline and thought yuck, you're not alone — oral health experts agree with you. One reason is because your hair could break and become lodged in your teeth, attracting bacteria. But even if you managed to dislodge some food, your hair will not remove plaque along the gumline as effectively as floss.

✓ A SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Use conventional floss, a floss pick, or a water flosser. As another added benefit, you don't have to pull out your own hair.



NOT-SO-SAFE TREND #5

Drinking pineapple juice before wisdom tooth removal



! WHY THIS ISN'T SAFE: People try this in an attempt to reduce swelling after the surgery. But the sugar and acid in pineapple juice can actually make that swelling worse by irritating your teeth and gums.

✓ A SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Post surgery, follow your dentist's advice and use ice to help alleviate any swelling. Ice packs and gargling with salt water (be sure not to swallow) are also safe at-home remedies.

The main takeaway: You shouldn't take damaging shortcuts with your oral health. If you're concerned about your teeth and gums or want to make a cosmetic change to your smile, speak with your dentist about healthy ways to achieve the desired results.



DELTA DENTAL COST ESTIMATOR

FIND ANSWERS to your cost questions

It's a good feeling to weigh your options and know you made the right choice. That's why we offer our versatile and easy-to-use cost estimator tool — so we can help you make informed decisions and get the most out of your care.

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