

# grin!®

## Great big smiles IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

HEALTH RISKS  
of pica cravings

Choosing  
BETTER BREAD

SET GOALS  
to build a healthier you

summer 2023

# in this issue of grin!



## NEWS + RESEARCH

- 4 On topic with Dr. Dill: the pros and cons of probiotics
- 17 Dentists and dental hygienists: Do you know the difference?
- 18 Health risks of pica cravings

## WELLNESS + NUTRITION

- 5 Mouth-friendly recipe: healthy coleslaw
- 6 Create the ultimate veggie platter
- 12 Choosing better bread
- 16 Do cocktail bombs and fizzers sink your oral health?

## FUN + INSPIRATION

- 7 Readers ask, we answer: What color bands should I get on my braces?
- 8 Great big smiles in the great outdoors
- 11 Set goals to build a healthier you
- 15 Your summer smile list

## grin! more

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



### FUN + INSPIRATION

#### Wellness your way: make exercise more convenient

It's possible to keep your overall health (and your oral health!) in check by taking advantage of small breaks in your day. Find out how to work out on your schedule with intermittent exercise.



### WELLNESS + NUTRITION

#### Healthy summer essentials

Sun's out, smile's out! Make sure to protect your oral health while you're swimming, at a barbecue, or even taking a walk in the park. Discover how to reduce your risk all summer long.



### Looking for reasons to smile?

Access the digital version anytime at [grinmag.com](http://grinmag.com) or by scanning the QR code.



ON TOPIC WITH DR. DILL

# The pros and cons of probiotics

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.

Some people use probiotic supplements as a source of “good bacteria” to help them achieve health-related goals. But what does “good bacteria” mean? And does it have a positive or negative effect on your oral health?

More research is needed, but some studies do indicate that certain groups of helpful bacteria — mainly *Lactobacilli* and *Bifidobacteria* — can fight or cancel out some adverse oral health effects from the bad bacteria in your mouth.

### Where do probiotics come from?

Probiotics naturally occur in certain foods, such as most yogurts, soft cheeses, fermented milk, kimchi, sauerkraut, and kombucha. They can also come as a supplement in a variety of forms — capsules, pills, powders, and liquids.

### The pros of probiotics

Further research is needed to determine exactly how probiotics interact with your oral and overall health. There are a few ways probiotics may benefit your teeth, gums, and overall health.



**Reduce bad breath**  
It's possible that probiotics can reduce or eliminate bad breath in some people by combating the bacteria causing the bad breath.



**Relieve symptoms of gum disease**  
Certain studies suggest that probiotics can help reduce symptoms of inflammation and tenderness caused by gingivitis.



**Limit plaque and tooth decay**  
“Good” bacteria may help protect your tooth enamel, reducing your risk of cavities and tooth decay.



**Other potential benefits**  
Certain probiotics can improve digestion and gut health.

### Potential cons to consider

In general, probiotics are not harmful to your health. But potential side effects can come in the form of allergic reactions, an upset stomach, bloating, and diarrhea. You're more likely to experience those symptoms if you use probiotics while you are already sick (with the flu, for instance) or if you have a compromised immune system.

### Consult your physician before using probiotics

Most people get the good bacteria they need with a nutritious diet rich in fiber.

Also, be aware that when a probiotic is sold as a dietary supplement, it doesn't require approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration unless the product makes health claims. Because of this, it's best to talk to your physician before you start using a probiotic supplement.

### MOUTH-FRIENDLY RECIPE

# Healthy coleslaw

Bring a side that's welcomed at every summer occasion! This colorful coleslaw uses calcium-rich Greek yogurt (instead of mayo) for a tangy twist. The combination of red and green cabbage, along with the carrots, adds just the right amount of crunch to satisfy.

### Ingredients:

#### For the slaw

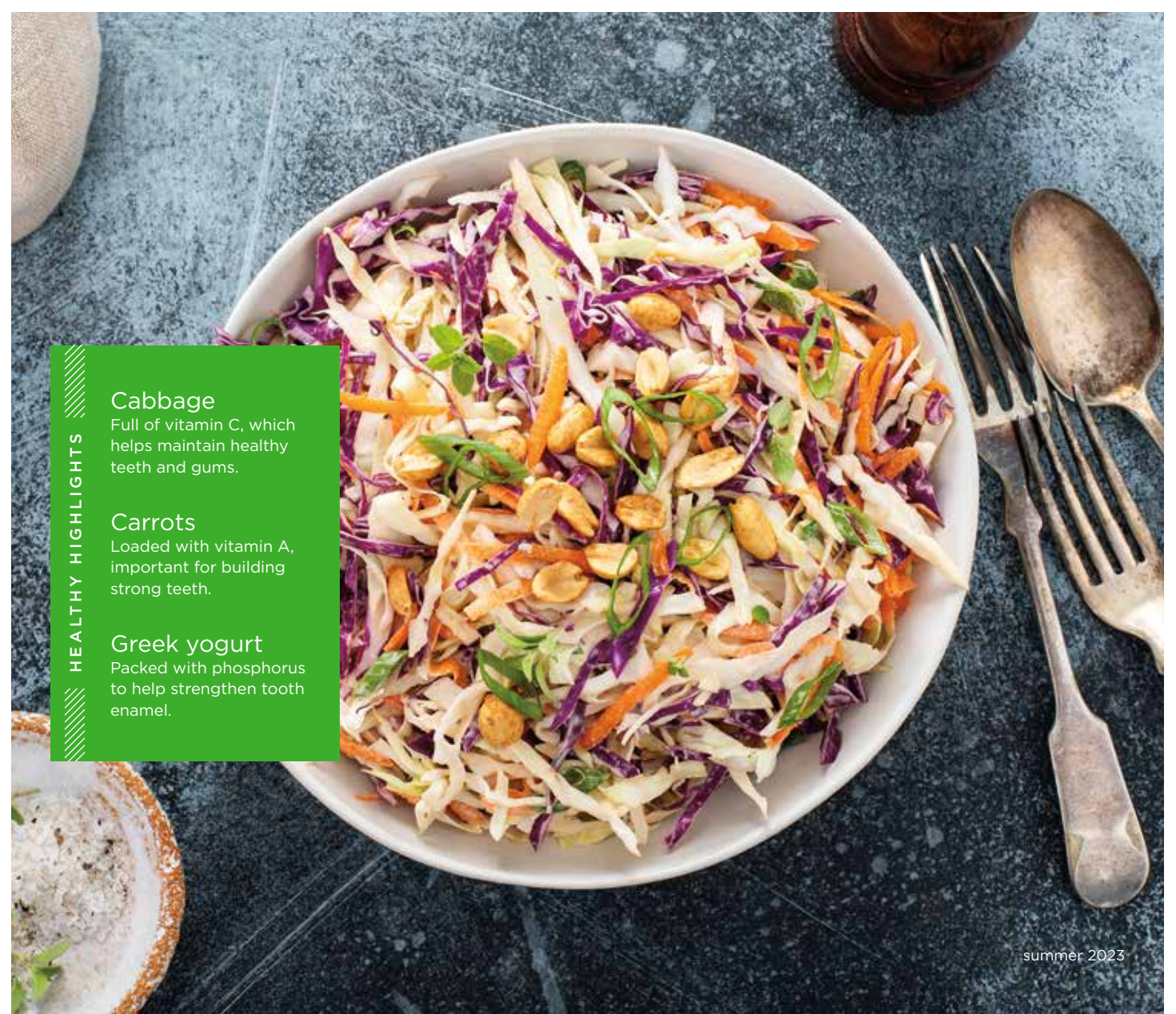
- 6 cups green cabbage, shredded
- 2 cups red cabbage, shredded
- 1 cup carrots, shredded
- Peanuts (optional)
- 1 green onion, chopped (optional)

#### For the dressing

- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon garlic clove, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

### Directions:

- 1 Mix the ingredients for the dressing together in a small bowl.
- 2 Place shredded cabbages and carrots in a large bowl.
- 3 Pour the dressing over the slaw mix and toss to combine.
- 4 Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 4 hours.
- 5 Enjoy!



**HEALTHY HIGHLIGHTS**

- Cabbage**  
Full of vitamin C, which helps maintain healthy teeth and gums.
- Carrots**  
Loaded with vitamin A, important for building strong teeth.
- Greek yogurt**  
Packed with phosphorus to help strengthen tooth enamel.

## Create the ultimate veggie platter

The veggie platter is the unsung hero of the backyard barbecue. This healthy and colorful option can help you limit sugary sauces and cavity-causing sweet treats. Use the tips and tricks below to build the perfect tray — one that satisfies your taste buds *and* protects your smile.

### Choose mouth-friendly veggies

Any raw, crunchy vegetable will cause you to produce saliva that washes remaining food out of your mouth. And these classic choices provide even more oral health benefits.

**Broccoli** ..... reduces risk of gingivitis with vitamin C. It also provides vitamin K, which can help maintain strong bones.



**Asparagus** ..... and other dark greens are packed with oral health-friendly nutrients such as vitamins A and C and calcium. The phosphorus in these vegetables can also improve your body's calcium absorption.



**Celery** ..... provides fiber that can help combat gum disease.



**Carrots** ..... offer vitamin A, which helps keep your tooth enamel and soft tissue healthy. They're also a great source of vitamin C.

### Add some flair to your vegetable platter

If you want to try something new, here are a few ideas for changing up your veggie tray.



#### Try some grilled veggies

These will stand out from the crowd and are a healthy way to enjoy tooth-friendly choices like bell peppers, zucchini, and onions.



#### Make a fresh, tasty dip

Use a recipe with yogurt, avocados, cottage cheese, or cream cheese as a base. These are healthier choices than starchy dips with added sugars, trans fats, and highly processed ingredients.



#### Include some fresh fruit

Pears can neutralize acids that cause tooth decay, and any crunchy fruit will cause you to produce more saliva. This helps wash away food and reduce bacteria growth.

The next time you're wondering what to bring to a backyard barbecue, consider supporting your oral health with a colorful veggie tray.



## Readers ask, we answer

*Stella asks:*

“What color bands should I get on my braces?”

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

With a rainbow of colors to choose from, you're sure to find braces bands that suit your style and personality. But narrowing your options isn't always easy. Use our guide to help you decide!

### What are the most popular colors?

You can choose from many different colors of the rubber bands on braces, with popular options being clear, blue, green, purple, pink, or neon colors. You can also combine a variety of colors, but keep in mind that more than two or three colors at once can make your mouth look a little busy.

### How do I pick the right color for me?

You don't have to pick just one color for the entire time you have braces. Have fun swapping out your bands each time you see your orthodontist, if that's your style. As you make your color selection, remember:

- **Dark green, purple, orange, and burgundy** can make your teeth appear whiter.
- **White or yellow** bands could do the opposite and make your teeth appear more yellow.
- **Clear** options can be stained by foods and drinks with deep colors, such as coffee, tea, or grape juice.
- **Black or brown** bands could make it appear that food is caught in your teeth.

Take time to also consider your personal features and preferences:

- **Your skin tone may play into your decision.** Lighter skin tones are complemented by darker colors and vice versa.
- **Your hair and eye color** can be a factor. Blue and purple bands highlight blue or green eyes, and green bands make brown eyes pop.
- **Have fun with it!** You can try colors from your favorite sports team or match the season, like a green-and-blue combination around summer.

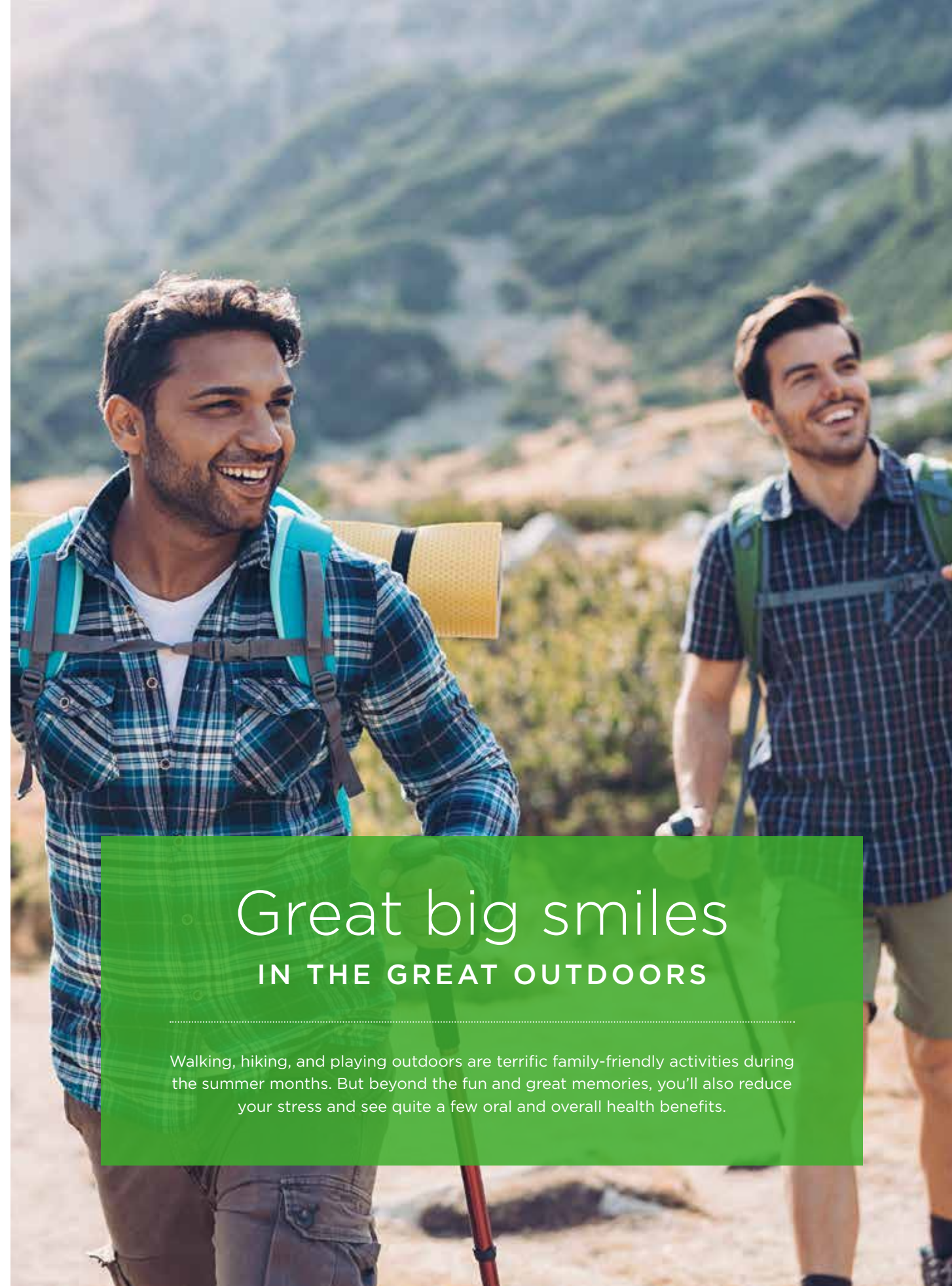
For adults, it's a good idea to think about what color of bands your employer will consider professional. Dark colors, clear bands, and silver bands are more work-appropriate options.

### Are there any risks to colored bands?

Not at all. There are no drawbacks to your teeth and gums from using colored bands. They are functionally the same as traditional bands, just with a little more pizzazz.

### Important: Take care of your braces!

No matter what color you choose, follow the instructions your orthodontist and dentist provide. This includes brushing after meals and using the special floss from your orthodontist. It's also best to avoid nuts, popcorn, gum, and other foods that can bend braces or get caught in them.



# Great big smiles IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Walking, hiking, and playing outdoors are terrific family-friendly activities during the summer months. But beyond the fun and great memories, you'll also reduce your stress and see quite a few oral and overall health benefits.

## Share your smile in the sun

The right park, trail, or campsite can be home to all sorts of fun.



Football, soccer, and disc golf will all get your heart rate up, exercise your muscles, and trigger the release of stress-reducing endorphins.



You can achieve the same benefits by walking, birdwatching, or finding scenic spots to photograph.



Parents with young kids can play tag or catch, collect leaves, look for unique animals, or find rocks to paint later.



In addition to improving your mood, regularly engaging in physical activities like hiking and biking can help lower your risk of heart disease, lung disease, and cancer.

## Outdoor activity supports your oral health

Being active outside is more than a good time. It can also improve your oral health.



Beautiful views and the endorphins your body releases while you are being active can reduce your stress level. You'll then be less likely to grind your teeth and bite your nails, so you can avoid chipped or cracked enamel.



Being active regularly also improves posture. This boosts your oral health by keeping your jaw in alignment, which can help reduce headaches.



### Protect your skin and lips from the sun

To limit sunburn and cancer risk, wear sunscreen and lip balm with at least SPF 30 and reapply frequently. It also helps to spend time in the shade, and to shield your face, ears, and eyes by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and UV blocking sunglasses.

Continued from page 9

### Help your smile by preparing nutritious food

Common summer snacks like s'mores, chips, and soda have lots of added sugar. The sugar can stick to your teeth, leading to cavities and tooth decay. Here are a few healthier options.



#### Meal ideas

A few meals that are mouth-friendly and camp-friendly include eggs, sweet potatoes grilled in foil packets, or kebabs with chicken and grilled vegetables.



#### Snack ideas

Fresh fruit, nuts, and veggies with hummus dip are all nutritious options that taste great outdoors.



Make sure to properly store and prepare food and to sanitize your cooking equipment to reduce risk of illness.



Wash snacks and meals down with water to keep your mouth clean, reduce bacteria, and stay hydrated.

### Keep up with your oral health

Prepare ahead of time so you have everything you need to maintain a fresh, healthy smile in the great outdoors.



Bring a travel toothbrush, toothpaste, and floss so you're well-equipped to care for your smile.

If you have trouble remembering to brush at night when you're outside of your normal routine, set an alert on your phone or ask a fellow camper to remind you.

Stop eating after you brush. Snacks before bed will also feed the oral bacteria in your mouth, which causes harm to your teeth while you sleep.

#### A little planning goes a long way

The key to staying healthy while camping, hiking, or spending time outdoors is to prepare in advance. Make sure you have the gear, food, and oral health equipment that you need — then, simply enjoy your time in nature.

## Set goals and build a healthier you

Summer is a season of fun and excitement, which makes it a great time to refresh your goals for the year. Make your summer goals more effective by clearly defining them in this S.M.A.R.T. goal exercise. Build your goal using the space provided.



#### Use the exercise below to create your own goal.

**Here's an example:** I want to brush twice each day and floss daily. I will accomplish this goal by tweaking my daily routine so it's easier to remember to brush. For instance, I will place my cell phone charger next to my toothbrush so I don't forget to brush at night. Accomplishing this goal will help me avoid cavities. I want to reach this goal within 14 days.

<b>Specific</b>	What is your specific goal?	Clearly define what you want to do. "I want to brush more" is too vague, but "I want to brush twice and floss once daily" has enough detail.
<b>Measurable</b>	How will you track progress?	Monitor your progress to stay on track. In our example, you could check off each brush with a note next to the bathroom mirror.
<b>Achievable</b>	What can you do to make this goal achievable?	Consider changes that will help you reach your goal. The example used a small tweak to help accomplish the overall goal, placing a cell phone charger next to the toothbrush.
<b>Relevant</b>	Why is this goal a priority for you?	Your reason why can help you stay motivated. In the example, it was to avoid cavities.
<b>Time bound</b>	When do you want to reach your goal?	Set an end date to work toward. If you have a bigger overall goal, setting smaller milestones along the way may help you stay motivated.

Post your S.M.A.R.T. goal sheet somewhere visible as a reminder to keep going! If you have kids, you can help them create some goals, too. They may enjoy learning about it and tracking their progress along the way.



# Choosing BETTER BREAD

You can enjoy bread as part of a well-rounded, nutritious diet. But not all breads are created equal — some are better for your health than others.

How can bread harm your health? Products with processed flour and a lot of added sugar can stick to your teeth and breed bacteria. The bacteria, over time, can lead to plaque, gum disease, and other issues. Here's what to look for so you can protect your smile.

## How to choose healthier bread

It's important to read food labels. There's a lot of information listed there, but when it comes to bread, here's what to look for:



**Whole grains** should be listed as a primary ingredient because processed grains lose nutrients and often have more sugar.

**Added sugar** can make any bread unhealthy. Try and stay below the recommended daily allowance.

**Fiber** helps fight gum disease and can be found in whole grains. Look for at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.

## More ways to protect your smile



**Drink water while you eat and after your meal.** This way the bread won't stick to your teeth and strengthen bacteria that causes cavities and tooth decay.

**Brush twice a day for two minutes.** Use a fluoride toothpaste and reach the entire surface of each tooth. Remember to floss daily.

**Chew sugar-free gum.** It can stimulate saliva production, which helps wash away food and keep your mouth clean. *Bonus: It can also mask bad breath!*

Continued from page 13

## The risks and rewards of different bread types

**White bread**

Probably the worst choice for your health, white bread usually has a high sugar count. It also loses fiber and most other nutrients when the flour is processed.

**100% whole wheat**

Whole grain or whole wheat bread provides vitamins, whole grains, and fiber. Fiber helps make you feel full, which can help you snack less and keep your mouth clean. But not all wheat breads are equal. Check the food label to make sure whole grains are listed and to review the added sugar content.

**Rye**

This is a good source of mouth-friendly nutrients such as magnesium, potassium, antioxidants, and fiber. Many rye breads on the market are not made with whole grains, though, so make sure to read the food label and see if whole grains is listed as the top ingredient.

**Sourdough**

This choice doesn't offer any oral health benefits. If you love sourdough, it does provide microbes that benefit your gut health by breaking down proteins earlier. This makes it easier to digest than many other breads.

**Gluten-free**

These breads are made with ingredients like rice flour and potato flour instead of wheat, rye, and barley. They can be high in fat, sugar, and salt, and offer less fiber and B vitamins. If you can't eat gluten, be extra careful reading these food labels.

**Ezekiel bread**

Another healthier choice, this bread provides vitamin C, has no added sugar, and is made from sprouted whole grains such as wheat and barley. Because it has less sugar, it can be a better choice for your oral health.

**Let's toast to better bread**

Whenever possible, choose whole wheat, high fiber options like whole wheat or Ezekiel bread. They can be part of a healthy diet and the nutrients they provide can lower cholesterol levels and risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and cancer. When you do eat bread, try to minimize any risk with a good oral health routine and plenty of water.

## Your SUMMER smile list



- 1 Build a colorful veggie platter to share. Get some inspiration on page 6.
- 2 Watch the night sparkle at your local fireworks show.
- 3 Develop a friendship with a senior in assisted living.
- 4 Attend an outdoor yoga class.
- 5 Go jump in the lake!

- 6 Give your traditional coleslaw a healthy kick. Try this recipe on page 5.
- 7 Create a summer playlist to dance to.
- 8 Take a family camping trip and tell stories around the campfire.
- 9 Give your backyard a makeover.
- 10 Declutter and host a yard sale.





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

## Do cocktail bombs and fizzers sink your oral health?

Cocktail bombs and fizzers are a newer drink trend. Sort of like a bath bomb for your beverage, these products are small, solid balls or cubes that dissolve in your drink, adding a little fun, fizz, and flavor. They don't contain any alcohol and can be used to make margaritas, mimosas, or non-alcoholic mocktails.

### What is in a cocktail fizzer or bomb?

While there are many different cocktail fizzers on the market, most typically include fruit juice, gelatin, and sugar as the ingredients. Plus, you should consider the liquid you use to dissolve the fizzers. Let's explore how that can influence your smile.

- **Sugar** in the drink can feed the bacteria that cause plaque and acid, and weakens tooth enamel. Excess sugar can also lead to risks such as diabetes and high blood pressure.
- **Alcohol** and sugar can both contribute to dry mouth, an increase in bacteria, and bad breath.
- **Sparkling water** can contain sugar or high levels of citric acid, both of which can increase your cavity risk.



### Simple ways to protect your oral health

While cocktails do have the potential to damage your teeth and gums, there are ways to minimize your risk.

- **Be mindful of your cocktail garnish.** A lemon or lime wedge seems innocent, but just a bit of lemon juice has enough acid to damage your tooth enamel. Try to find a less acidic substitute, like olives or berries.
- **Drink water between sips and shortly after you finish the beverage.** This helps wash away the bacteria, keeps you hydrated, and prevents dry mouth.
- **Wait at least 30 minutes to brush your teeth after your last drink.** Brushing too soon after acidic food or drinks can erode your tooth enamel.

**Our verdict:** It's best to limit these fun and bubbly drinks to special occasions. Follow the tips above to minimize risk and remember to maintain your daily oral health routine (even after a celebratory drink or two).

## Dentists and dental hygienists: Do you know the difference?

Your dentist and dental hygienist are trained professionals who work together to help you achieve and maintain your oral health. But not everyone knows what separates each role. Let's learn the difference between two experts who protect your smile.



### Dental hygienists

During your appointment, your dental hygienist will answer any questions you may have. They can give you advice for practicing good oral hygiene and explain the role of nutrition in maintaining your oral health, for example.

Your hygienist also prepares you for the dentist by performing other important work. They will:

- Conduct an initial screening of your mouth for signs of oral health issues.
- Complete a thorough cleaning of your teeth.
- Take X-rays and apply preventive materials like sealants and fluoride, if required.

Depending on their training and the state where they practice, your hygienist may have other expanded functions.

A dental hygienist has an important role, one that requires attention to detail, great communication skills, and an associate or bachelor's degree in dental hygiene. The degree must come from a program that is approved by the Commission on Dental Accreditation.

### Dentists

Dentists are doctors who specialize in oral health. During your appointment, they examine your mouth, then diagnose and create treatment plans to maintain or restore your oral health. Your dentist will also take the lead on anything else that is needed. They will:

- Interpret X-rays and diagnostic tests.
- Perform procedures such as filling cavities, placing implants and crowns, and extracting teeth.
- Treat dental emergencies or injuries.

Your dentist's educational background makes them an excellent source of information on your oral health and how it may interact with your overall health.

- Earning a doctorate requires an undergraduate degree plus four years of dental school.
- Upon graduating dental school, a dentist will receive a doctorate of dental surgery (DDS) or doctorate of dental medicine (DMD). Both degrees include the same training.
- Many dentists continue with years of additional training in a focus area such as oral surgery, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, endodontics (root canals), or another specialty.

### A dynamic dental duo

Your dental hygienist and dentist work together to reduce your risk for cavities, tooth decay, gum disease, and other health risks. Either one would be happy to answer any questions you have about taking care of your oral health. Make sure you attend your regularly scheduled appointments so they can safeguard your smile!



# HEALTH RISKS of pica cravings

Have you ever been unable to stop yourself from eating soap, ice, or other things that aren't food? If so, you're not alone — and there's a name for these urges.



**What causes it?**

More research is needed to fully understand the complex reasons that may lead to this behavior. While the exact reasons are unknown, pica can be triggered by pregnancy, stress, and/or nutritional deficiencies like a lack of iron, calcium, or zinc.



**Who gets pica?**

It occurs most often in pregnant women and young children under 6, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder and some psychiatric disorders.



**How is pica harmful?**

Pica cravings are difficult to control and eating nonfood items can cause damage to your teeth, gums, and digestive system. There can be a number of other risks depending on what is being eaten.

## 5 COMMON PICA CRAVINGS



### Dirt and soil

This craving is often linked to nutrient deficiencies. A lack of iron, for instance, may make you want to eat dirt. This can be harmful to your health because you don't know what's in the soil you're eating — it could contain animal waste, parasites, or hard bits that can hurt your teeth, like rocks or metal.



### Chalk

Although the content of the chalk is usually nontoxic in small doses, eating it is still a health risk for many reasons. As a hard nonfood substance, it is likely to cause chipped teeth or wear down tooth enamel, which can cause cavities. Eating chalk can also lead to digestive issues such as constipation.



### Ice

An urge to eat ice doesn't seem so bad at first. It's just water, right? But this form of pica can wreak havoc on your teeth. Chewing ice can damage tooth enamel, move the wires in your braces, crack your teeth, loosen your fillings, or irritate your gums. Ice cravings are often associated with iron deficiency.



### Soap

This is a dangerous one. Eating soap can cause tooth and gum damage, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and liver damage. If you or your child has eaten soap or any other cleaner, check the package right away to see if it is toxic. If yes, call 911 immediately. If not, continue to watch for the symptoms like nausea or vomiting and call 911 if this occurs.



### Pet food

While pet food is made from ingredients that are not unsafe to eat, it is not meant for humans. Many forms of pet food can be a choking hazard for small children and can pose other risks to adults. Dog food, for instance, may not be stored as carefully as human food and may be raw, two factors that can cause bacterial illness.

### Should I worry about pica?

It's important to recognize pica early so you can take steps to control your urges before any damage is done to your teeth, gums, and overall health. Pica cravings typically stop on their own but may recur. Although pica is often diagnosed in childhood, it can also occur in adults.

If you or your child struggle with pica, tell your dentist so they can help you minimize the risks to your oral health. If the issue persists, reach out to a licensed mental health provider, as therapy is the primary form of treatment.



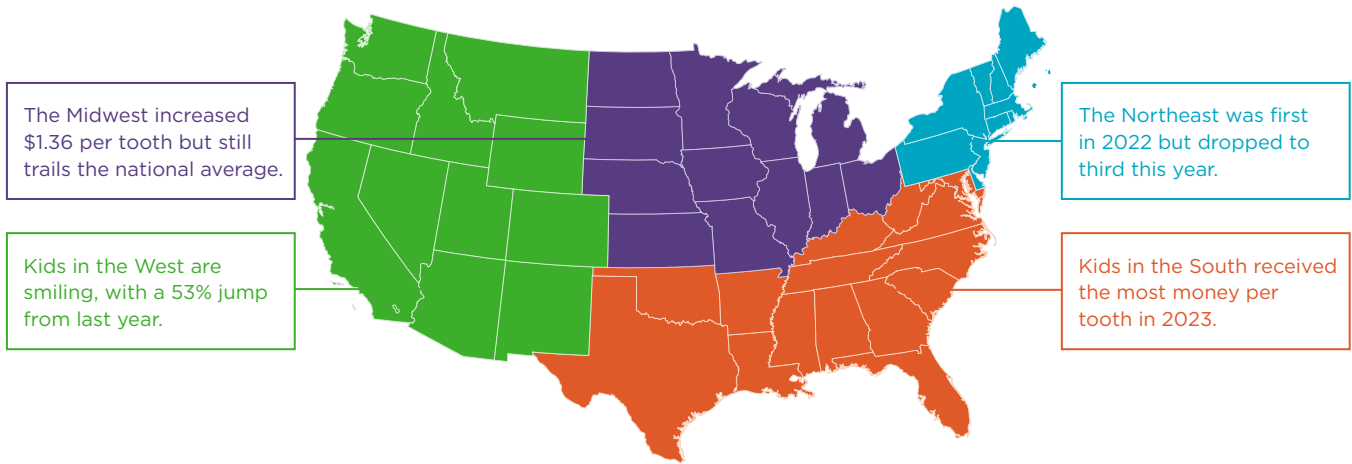
DELTA DENTAL ORIGINAL TOOTH FAIRY POLL®

# HOW GENEROUS is the Tooth Fairy?

Even the Tooth Fairy can't escape inflation. At least, that's what we found in the 25<sup>th</sup> year of our Original Tooth Fairy Poll.

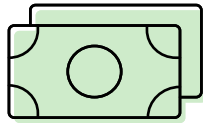
At an all-time high, the average value of a single tooth increased to **\$6.23** IN 2023.

## Tooth Fairy giving by region



## The Tooth Fairy and the economy

The results of the poll historically track with the trends of Standard & Poor's 500 Index (S&P 500). While the average value of a single lost tooth increased 16% this year, the S&P 500 declined 11%.



**379% INCREASE**

The average Tooth Fairy gift has risen from \$1.30 to \$6.23 per tooth since the poll began in 1998.



**\$30 PER TOOTH**

If current trends continue, this will be the payout for a single tooth in 2048!

### Make your own Tooth Fairy magic

Want to see a gap-toothed smile after the Tooth Fairy visits your kids? Head to [originaltoothfairypoll.com](https://originaltoothfairypoll.com) for fun activities, arts and crafts, letters and certificates written from the Tooth Fairy, and more.