

grin!®

Summer traditions
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Simple summer
SAFETY CHECKLIST

**ORAL HEALTH
CHALLENGES**
unique to men

Behind the scenes of your
DENTIST APPOINTMENT



spring 2024

in this issue of grin!



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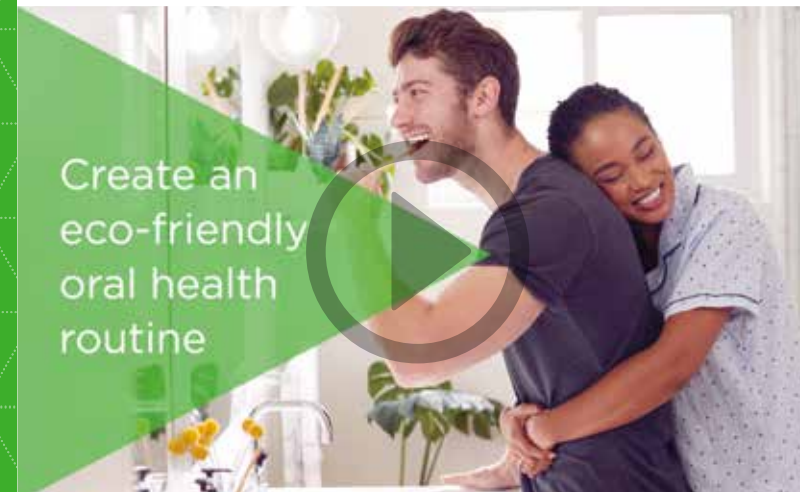
grin! more

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



WELLNESS + NUTRITION Preventive practices: How to reduce your oral cancer risk

A few healthy best practices can greatly lower your chances of developing oral cancer. Review these tips to find ways to protect yourself.



Create an eco-friendly oral health routine

FUN + INSPIRATION Green oral health routine

There are plenty of ways to go green while cleaning your smile. Support your environment and learn how to make your oral health routine more eco-friendly.



Looking for reasons to smile?

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

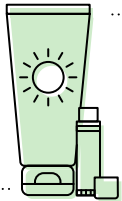


ON TOPIC WITH DR. DILL

The pros and cons of summer sunshine

Joseph Dill, DDS, is Delta Dental's Chief Dental Officer. With more than 35 years of experience in the dental field, including 10 in private and public health practice and 20 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

Even from 93 million miles away, the sun powers our planet. And it doesn't stop there. Sunshine (or the lack of it) can have a big influence on your personal health and well-being. Let's break down what's good and bad about spending time in the summer daylight.



To shield your skin and lips from the sun, apply SPF 30 sunscreen and lip balm approximately 15 to 30 minutes before heading out. This helps your skin fully absorb the SPF. Also, be sure to reapply every couple of hours to remain protected.

Look on the bright side

From stronger bones to better mental health, sunshine can greatly benefit your emotional, oral, and overall health.



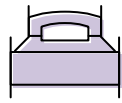
Vitamin D from sunshine helps your body absorb calcium for strong teeth and bones. And don't worry, using sunscreen regularly does not cause vitamin D deficiency.



Moderate exposure to sunlight can reduce blood pressure, although more studies are needed to determine why.



Sunlight causes your body to release serotonin, a hormone that helps you feel relaxed and calm. This can improve your mood and help reduce stress-related issues like tooth grinding (bruxism).



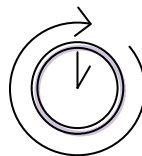
Releasing serotonin during the day also boosts your body's production of melatonin at night, helping you sleep soundly.

Catch some sun — but don't overdo it

The benefits of sunshine are real, but as with many good things, moderation is key. Too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can cause immediate issues and contribute to long-term health risks:



Short-term overexposure can cause chapped lips, sunburn, dehydration, and temporary but painful eye irritation (known as photokeratitis).



Long-term overexposure can cause issues like the early development of wrinkles, skin blemishes, cataracts in the eyes (which can limit your vision), as well as lip and skin cancer.

For more smile-friendly tips, check out our summer safety checklist on page 11 and our tips for staying cool in the summer heat on page 18.

Enjoy your time in the sun

Time spent under blue skies and sunshine can improve your oral and overall health. Just be sure to protect yourself from the risks of overexposure!

MOUTH-FRIENDLY RECIPE

Grilled peach salad

Savor the essence of summer with a sweet and savory salad that combines fresh grilled peaches, mixed greens, and a burst of berries. This vibrant medley makes a perfect side to your seasonal spread or a light and refreshing meal any time of day.

Ingredients:

For the salad:

- 6 fresh peaches, ripe but firm
- Olive oil
- ½ cup fresh blueberries
- ½ cup fresh blackberries
- 5 ounces mixed greens
- ½ cup feta cheese crumbles

For the dressing:

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1-2 tablespoons honey, or to taste
- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Directions:

Make the dressing:

- 1 Combine all ingredients in a mason jar, seal, and shake until evenly combined; set aside.

Prep and grill the peaches:

- 1 Preheat the grill to medium-high heat and oil the grates.
- 2 Cut the peaches into thick wedges and brush with olive oil on all sides.
- 3 Grill peaches for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, allowing grill marks to develop.
- 4 Flip the peaches with a thin spatula, lifting from underneath.
- 5 Transfer the peaches to a plate and let cool.

Assemble the salad:

- 1 Arrange a bed of mixed greens on a large platter.
- 2 Top with berries, peaches, and crumbled feta.
- 3 Drizzle with prepared dressing.
- 4 Enjoy!



HEALTHY HIGHLIGHTS

- Peaches** contain fluoride, which helps remineralize teeth
- Berries** are rich in antioxidants and vitamin C
- Leafy greens** are packed with calcium for strong teeth



5 tips
for a
SMILE-FRIENDLY
SACK LUNCH

Elevating your sack lunch to be more oral health-friendly is simpler than it seems. By making a few adjustments, you can transform your midday meal into a powerful ally in the fight against cavities.



1

Swap for whole-grain bread

Substituting white bread with its whole-grain counterpart is less likely to contribute to tooth decay since it has less sugar. Plus, whole-grain bread has more fiber and nutrients, keeping you fuller and more focused during the day.



2

Include calcium-rich foods

Incorporate calcium-rich foods like cheese, yogurt, and milk into your lunch menu. Calcium and phosphates strengthen tooth enamel and help prevent cavities, making them perfect for a tooth-friendly meal.



3

Choose nutrient-rich sides

Instead of reaching for bagged chips, crackers, or cookies, why not pack fresh fruits, vegetables, or nuts? Choosing nutrient-rich sides will help sustain your energy throughout the day. Plus, sugary foods sit on your teeth and can lead to cavities.



4

Pack a water bottle

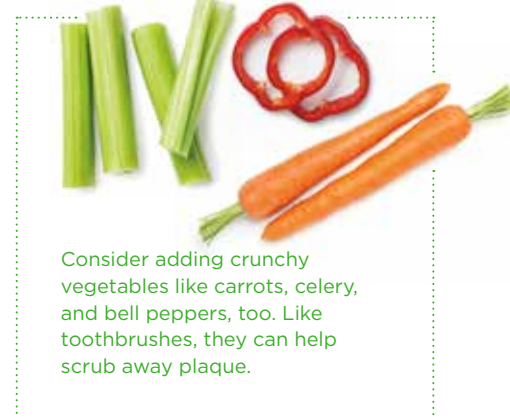
Staying hydrated and selecting the right drink is crucial for your overall health and protecting your mouth by washing away food particles and bacteria. Choose water in place of sugary sodas or juices that cause afternoon crashes.



5

Pack for freshness

Maintain the freshness of your lunch with an insulated bag and ice pack. This ensures all your oral health-friendly foods remain bacteria-free and delicious until it's time to eat. Plus, using a reusable bag is an eco-friendly option.



Consider adding crunchy vegetables like carrots, celery, and bell peppers, too. Like toothbrushes, they can help scrub away plaque.

By implementing these tips, you can enjoy a smile-friendly meal that benefits your mouth and body.

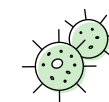


Readers ask,
we answer

Lyle asks:
“What are the top causes of yellow teeth?”

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

It's a great question! There are more causes of tooth discoloration than you might think — but there are also plenty of ways you can protect your smile.



Poor oral hygiene

Plaque and bacteria will cause yellow teeth if they are not regularly removed with a good daily oral health routine. This means brushing for two minutes twice per day with fluoride toothpaste and flossing daily.

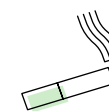
Replace your toothbrush every three months or sooner if it begins to look frayed.



Certain foods and drinks

Items with a deep color like tomato sauce, berries, curry spices, coffee, tea, dark sodas and beers, and red wine can cause unwanted stains. To help keep your teeth from staining:

- Wash these items down with water after you consume them.
- Enjoy them with crunchy fruits and vegetables like apples, carrots, and celery to stimulate saliva production.



Tobacco use

In addition to raising your risk for many serious oral and overall health problems, the nicotine, tar, and other chemicals in tobacco products can yellow your teeth very quickly.



Some medications

Blood pressure medication, antihistamines for treating allergies, and certain other drugs can be a source of discolored teeth. If you're concerned a medication is staining your teeth, speak with your dentist or physician to discuss options.



Trauma or teeth grinding

Accidents, sports injuries, and teeth grinding can lead to fractured tooth enamel, exposing the yellower dentin underneath.

- To protect your teeth and gums from injury, wear a mouth guard and other appropriate safety gear when you play sports or physical games.
- To reduce teeth grinding, you can try limiting caffeine, practicing relaxation techniques like meditation, and speaking with your dentist about a night guard.



Genetics and aging

There's not much you can do about your genetics, but some people do naturally have thicker or whiter tooth enamel due to DNA.

As you age, the yellow layer of dentin under your enamel thickens. This can make your teeth appear more yellow. While you can't prevent age-related discoloration and erosion, you can slow it down by using a soft-bristled toothbrush and avoiding carbonated or acidic beverages.

Daily oral health for the win!

If daily oral health habits along with other best practices don't seem to be helping with your discoloration, it's recommended you consult your dentist. They can determine the cause of the problem and help answer any questions about tooth whitening options.

Summer traditions

FROM AROUND THE WORLD



America loves summer celebrations — from barbecues and parades to baseball games and state fairs, we find ways to spend time with friends and community.

And Americans aren't the only ones! All over the world, people take advantage of the warm weather, with annual festivals that mix old-time tradition with a little modern fun. Here are a few events that keep our global neighbors smiling all summer long.

Sumidagawa Fireworks Festival

TOKYO, JAPAN

(Held on the last Saturday in July)



Fireworks have a long history in Japan and are a big part of summer culture, but the most popular event may be the Sumidagawa Fireworks Festival, which launches about 20,000 fireworks every July. This annual spectacle includes vibrant pops of light that look like happy faces, animals, characters from Japanese pop culture, and other shapes and patterns.

The first event can be traced back to 1733, to honor those who passed in a terrible famine and to ward off evil spirits. Today, it has evolved into a joyous and popular celebration attended by over 1 million people each year.

Big events with large crowds can keep you out much later than normal. Make sure you plan ahead so you can take care of your smile without worry. Here are a few tips:

- Stay hydrated with water instead of drinking carbonated, acidic, or sugary beverages.
- Keep a few essentials handy, like floss, travel-sized toothpaste, and lip balm with at least SPF 30.
- Make sure you brush and floss before bed, even if you get home late!

Picnic Day

AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY

(Held on the first Monday in August)



No one is completely sure why or when this holiday began, but it likely dates back to the late 1800s as an annual event (and rare day off from work!) for railway employees. Today, it is a national holiday in Australia's Northern Territory but not in the south.

The Harts Range Races are held each Picnic Day. This event includes horse racing, bull rides, whip cracking contests, and lizard racing. Like any picnic, there are foods that can help or harm your oral health. If you find yourself celebrating Picnic Day, remember that shrimp is a great source of calcium and phosphorus, which support strong teeth. But fresh mango and other acidic foods and drinks should be washed down with water.

You'll also want to limit savory items like sausage rolls and desserts like lamington, a sponge cake coated in sugar. These processed foods provide little nutrition and can stick to your teeth, increasing the chances of tooth decay.

Wondering how to pack a smile-friendly picnic? Learn how to prepare healthy on-the-go meals in our sack lunch article on page 6.

Continued from page 9

Wianki Festival

POLAND

(Held on the last Saturday in June)



By far the oldest tradition on our list, the Wianki ("Wreath") Festival is over a thousand years old! It started as a summer solstice celebration that included songs, fortune-telling, bonfires, and wreath-weaving. Today, this has expanded to include concerts, pop-up markets, "best wreath" competitions, and more.

Traditional Wianki Festival food includes poppy seed buns, plum and vanilla meringue cakes, and pastries filled with vegetables or meat. These are similar to other festival foods around the world, which can include processed bread, large quantities of sugar, or other ingredients that contribute to tooth decay.

- After you enjoy a sugary festival treat, drink some water to help keep your mouth clean.

Independence Day

AMERICA

(Held on the Fourth of July)



Let's end with a celebration closer to home. Each year, Americans across the country eat hot dogs, bake pies, and set off explosions in the sky. A few tips for making your holiday a healthier one:

- If you're at a barbecue or potluck, try filling most of your plate with healthier options like leafy greens (which are a great source of calcium) or grilled chicken (a lean protein source) instead of starchy potato dishes or fattier entrees like bratwurst.
- The sugar in desserts, side dishes, and alcoholic drinks can breed bacteria and cause cavities.

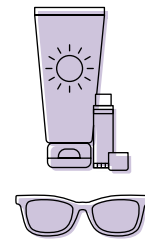
Summer festival and event season is here! Protect your teeth and gums while you're out and about so you can sightsee with a smile.



Simple summer safety checklist

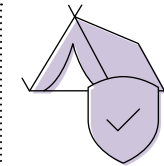
We all enjoy the warmth of the summer season a little differently. But whether you're hiking a scenic trail, reading a book poolside, or earning MVP in your softball league, it's important to stay safe in the sun.

Use this checklist to make sure you're always prepared to care for your oral health!



Skin, lip, and eye protection

- Apply sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 30
- Wear loose, light-colored clothing
- Bring a wide-brimmed hat
- Wear sunglasses with ultraviolet (UV) protection
- Other: _____



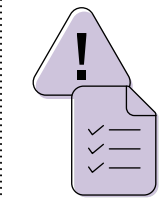
Camping safety

- Bring insect repellent
- Properly store food and dispose of trash
- Always extinguish fires when you're done with them
- Watch out for potentially harmful plants and animals like poison ivy and ticks
- Other: _____



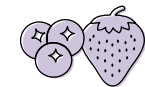
Hydration

- Bring a refillable water bottle
- Limit alcohol, coffee, caffeinated soda, and other dehydrating beverages
- Review an event map to locate water bottle filling stations
- Other: _____



Emergency planning

- Check the weather forecast
- Discuss your plans with an emergency contact
- Pack a first aid kit and oral health essentials (toothbrush, fluoride toothpaste, and floss)
- Other: _____



Don't love drinking water? Consider infusing it with seasonal fruit or opting for coconut water to get an electrolyte boost!

Add to this checklist with items or tasks specific to you! For instance, certain medications (such as antihistamines, antibiotics, or insulin) can make you more sensitive to the sun, which may require additional planning or precaution.

ORAL HEALTH CHALLENGES unique to men

Men are more likely than women to suffer from gum disease, dental trauma, oral cancers, and other dental issues. Why are they at higher risk for some oral health problems? There are a few different reasons, and some are more preventable than others.



Men are more likely to have poor oral health habits.

In general, men brush and floss less than women. This allows bacteria and plaque to buildup in the mouth, eventually leading to cavities, tooth decay, and gum disease.



Men skip their scheduled dental cleanings more often.

Instead, they tend to visit the dentist after a problem has worsened — making treatment more difficult and expensive! It's important to go to your routine preventive checkups to receive a cleaning and an oral health exam, which helps your dentist diagnose and treat problems early.



Men are more likely to drink alcohol and use tobacco.

Alcohol and tobacco use increase your risk for many oral and overall health problems: gum disease, tooth decay, several types of cancer, heart disease, weight gain and obesity, and more.



Men spend more time in the sun.

Extra exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays creates a higher risk for oral and skin cancers. Time in the sun can also create symptoms of dehydration, like dry mouth and bad breath.



Men lose testosterone as they age.

As men age, naturally lower testosterone levels can contribute to tooth loss and gum recession. It may also play a part in the development of chronic gum disease, but more research is needed to understand if there is a link.



Men sustain more oral injuries from games and sports.

Men are less likely to wear mouth guards and are more likely to suffer injury in contact sports such as football, basketball, hockey, soccer, or wrestling.

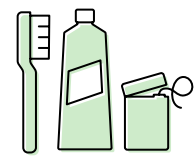
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How to protect your teeth and gums

For many men, better oral health may be as simple as changing a few habits and practicing good preventive care.

When you're caring for your smile, the best offense is a good defense:

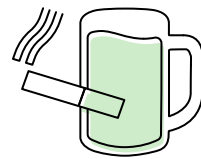


Brush twice a day for two minutes each time and floss once

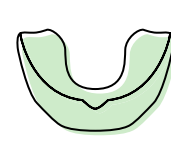
- Reach the entire surface of each tooth and brush at a 45-degree angle near the gumline



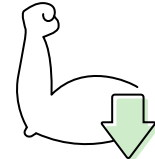
Prioritize your routine preventive dentist appointments



Follow recommended guidelines for alcohol consumption and avoid all tobacco



Wear a mouth guard and other safety gear when you play sports



If you have low testosterone, be sure to tell your dentist

If you struggle with your oral health or experience any new problems, always reach out to your dentist. They can help diagnose and treat the issue so you can smile easier.

Men: Take care of your oral health!

Men do have a higher risk of oral health problems, but much of this risk can be reduced or avoided. Daily care and a few simple lifestyle changes can help you maintain your smile and overall wellness.

Your SUMMER smile list



1 Soak up some vitamin D first thing in the morning by stepping outside.

2 Grill some peaches and toss them in the tasty recipe shown on page 5.

3 Swap your usual sack lunch for a healthier version. See page 6 for ideas.

4 Learn how others celebrate summer around the world. Check out page 8.

5 Plan a quiet break inside during the hottest part of the day.

6 Enjoy an outdoor concert on the lawn.

7 Stroll through the farmers market for fresh produce.

8 Paddle a canoe and see how good your balance is.

9 Paint inspiring messages on small rocks and leave them around town.

10 Gather wildflowers for a colorful bouquet.



////////// DENTAL TREND SPOTLIGHT //////////
Are tooth gems safe?

Tooth gems have surged in popularity, with an 85% increase in Pinterest® searches over the last year. These are tiny jewels, typically only a few millimeters in size, that are fixed to the surface of a tooth to offer a unique form of self-expression.



There are two types:

Semi-permanent tooth gems

These are applied without drilling to minimize tooth damage. The process is similar to braces, and it typically lasts six months to a year.

Permanent tooth gems

These include drilling a hole in the desired location of the gem and fixing a gem to that area. Like its title, this option is permanent.

Tooth gems are not a new trend. The ancient Mayan civilization was the earliest known users of tooth gems, inlaying stones like jadeite, turquoise, quartz, and serpentine into teeth with ancient cements. Interestingly, this practice was falsely believed to also prevent cavities and tooth decay.



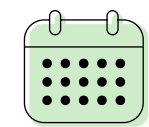
Despite the appeal, there are a few things you should consider before adding gems to your teeth. The most important being that you should never use DIY tooth gem kits, which are popular on social media. DIY gem kits pose the most risk. All tooth gems — but especially DIY tooth gems — trap plaque and create places for stray food particles and bacteria to hide. Additionally, if a tooth gem falls off, it could potentially chip the enamel. And, if applied incorrectly, tooth gems can irritate your gums or become a choking hazard. Because of this, dentists should always apply tooth gems. Dentists use nontoxic materials and ensure the gem is polished to prevent bacteria accumulation.

Our verdict: Approach with caution. The risk of damaging your enamel, which cannot regenerate or be replaced, if or when the gem falls off, is a significant downside. Not to mention the increased risk of cavities. Be sure to consult your dentist before trying any new viral dental trend.

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Behind the scenes at your dentist appointment

Have you ever wondered what goes on before you recline in that dental chair? Every visit starts with a lot of planning and teamwork to ensure you get the best care. Let's go behind the scenes to uncover how your dentist, dental assistants, dental hygienists, and office staff collaborate to prepare for your visit.



Scheduling and appointment management

Efficient booking, canceling, and rescheduling of appointments are crucial to keep everything running smoothly. Office staff work diligently behind the scenes to accommodate emergency visits, handle cancellations, and make sure that each patient receives timely and attentive care.

For the best experience, book your dental checkups a few months in advance. Appointments can fill up fast.



Verifying your coverage

Prior to your appointment, the office staff checks your dental coverage details. They can give you a breakdown of services and make sure there aren't any surprises with the cost of your treatment.



Reviewing your dental records

Your dentist and dental hygienist take time to review your dental records prior to your visit. This includes looking at your medical and treatment histories, X-rays, notes from past visits, and any special dental needs you may have.



Sterilizing dental instruments

A very crucial step dental assistants and dental hygienists take in preparing for your visit is the thorough cleaning and sterilization of dental instruments. They are run through an ultrasonic cleaner and then they are packaged and sterilized with high-pressure steam sterilizers. This kills any bacteria, viruses, or other pathogens.



Stocking up on dental supplies

The best way to end any dental visit is by receiving an oral health goodie bag with items like a toothbrush, floss, and travel-sized toothpaste. The office staff ensures everything is stocked up and readily available for you at your appointment.



Mastering new technology & continuing education

Dental professionals need to satisfy continuing education requirements to remain licensed. Dentists also learn to incorporate new equipment and techniques, from digital X-rays to 3D imaging and intraoral scanners.

From mastering new technologies to ensuring the cleanliness of the instruments and managing the day's schedule, every step is taken with your health and comfort in mind. Sit back, relax, and know you are in good hands as your dental team works to keep you smiling.



KEEP YOUR COOL

in the summer heat

The hottest days of the summer can cause all sorts of issues, from simple discomfort to oral and overall health risks like dehydration, but it is possible to beat the heat! Use these tips and tricks to sidestep the sizzle all summer long.



Choose the right outfit

Some clothes will help you stay cooler than others:

- Loose clothing allows air to flow over more of your skin. This evaporates your sweat and cools you down.
- Light-colored clothes will absorb less heat than darker clothes.
- Wear breathable fabrics like cotton and nylon instead of wool, polyester, and silk.

Whatever you wear, you should think of sunscreen and lip balm as must-have accessories. Make sure they have at least SPF 30 to shield your lips and skin from burning and reduce your risk for oral and skin cancers.

Drink plenty of water

Keep your reusable water bottle handy — being hydrated helps your body keep a normal temperature, something that is even more important when the weather is hot. But that's not all! Hydration also helps keep your mouth cleaner and:

- Improves cognition
- Boosts your mood
- Helps with sleep quality
- Washes away leftover food

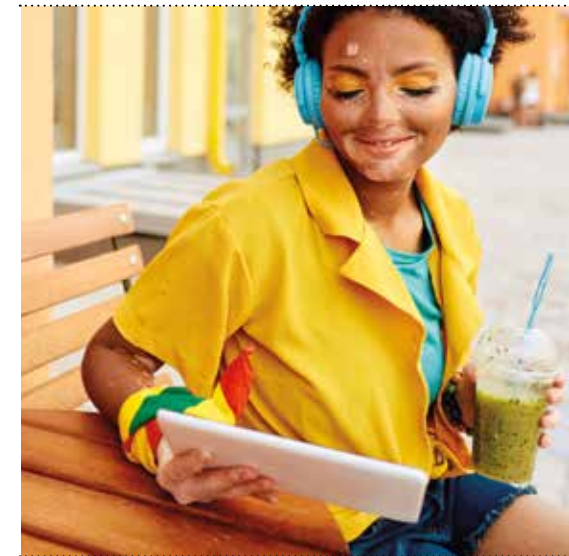
Beyond drinking water, you should also avoid dehydrating beverages like alcohol, coffee, tea, energy drinks, and caffeinated soda.

Safety tip: If you add ice to your water, resist the urge to chew on it. Ice can easily chip or crack your teeth!



Place ice packs or cold rags on your wrists and neck

Your wrists and neck are “pulse points,” areas of your body where blood vessels are close to the skin. Applying cold compresses to these spots causes the blood vessels to restrict, which helps cool your body faster.



Cool down with cold treats

When you find yourself craving a cold treat, try to reach for something with less sugar than ice cream. In addition to being bad for your teeth, gums, and overall health, eating too much sugar can speed up your metabolism and make you feel hotter.

Instead, try low-sugar Greek yogurt for tooth-strengthening calcium and muscle-building protein, or a nutritious smoothie. Add berries to support your gum health with vitamin C, or blend in vegetables like spinach and other leafy greens for more calcium!

Stay indoors during peak sun hours

Heat and ultraviolet rays coming from the sun are the strongest between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., so if you're concerned about overheating, plan to remain indoors during those hours.

Beyond simply staying inside, you can also:

- Use a slow cooker instead of your oven, which can spread heat throughout your home.
- Close your curtains and blinds to prevent direct sunlight from coming in through your windows.
- Head to the basement, if possible, because the air there is naturally cooler.



To pass the time indoors on a hot day, try a relaxing activity like reading, meditating, crafting, cooking, or simply completing a crossword puzzle. Managing your stress level can prevent headaches, lower your risk for heart disease, and even improve your oral health by reducing stress-based teeth grinding.



DENTAL INSURANCE 101 LIBRARY:

You've got questions, we've got (a lot) of answers

Need to brush up on your dental benefits? No problem! Our dental insurance 101 library is jam-packed with information that will help you get the most out of your dental coverage.



What is the value of dental insurance?



How to choose a dental insurance plan



Waiting periods explained



What does my dental insurance cover?



What is a dental discount plan?



And much, much more.

Knowledge is smile power

The more you know, the more you'll grin! Use our dental insurance 101 library to understand your current coverage or to choose the right plan for you.

[Learn more about your benefits](#)

