

grin!

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

holiday
2013
volume 2, issue 3

**5 tips to
keep teeth
healthy over
the holidays**

2013:
the year in dental

fun oral health
apps you
can download

the psychology
of smiling



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December

Happy Holidays!

Need original stocking-stuffer ideas? Instead of opting for sticky sweets or other sugary candies, try toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss or sugar-free treats to add a little oral health to your gift giving. If you do opt to include candy, it's especially important to throw in a new toothbrush – and encourage your kids to try it out after they enjoy their treats!



brushing up



*Ever wonder what your dentist is really thinking? Grin! wanted to find out, too, so we talked to Delta Dental network dentist **Dr. Kevin Norige** of South Windsor Smiles in Connecticut.*

What advice do you give your patients?

I inform them that oral wellness directly relates to whole-body wellness, so it's extremely important to keep your mouth healthy.

What's the best dental advice you've ever received? Floss properly daily, brush with fluoride toothpaste, eat healthy, reduce sugar and manage stress.

Any funny stories from the dental chair?

I have a patient who thinks I resemble Kevin Costner, so right before I come in for her exam, she asks the hygienist for her lipstick and denture back before I come in the room – even though I want to examine her mouth without the denture!

Do you brush and floss as much as you recommend?

Absolutely! I floss daily and brush more than twice daily – even on camping trips!

In your opinion, which celebrity has the best smile? It's so hard to say because so many of them have been cosmetically enhanced. I prefer a natural smile.



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



spotlight-ready smiles

There's no need to hide out by the punch bowl. No matter what the occasion, our holiday oral health tips will keep your smile bright and your mouth minty fresh.

Snack smart. Crispy, fresh fruits and vegetables help clean stickier foods and plaque from your teeth while increasing saliva flow to wash away bad-breath-causing bacteria.

Get groovy with garnish. Need a quick pick-me-up for your mouth? Snag a few sprigs of parsley or mint from the holiday platter for fresh breath in a jiffy.

Fantastic floss. Stash a travel-size floss in your purse or pocket so you can smile with confidence – even after tasting the spinach quiche.

Drink to your health. Swapping holiday beverages with fresh water will help you stay hydrated while washing away food particles and bacteria that can cause bad breath.

Refreshing remedies. Tempted by onion dip? Freshen your breath quickly by mixing water with a few drops of peppermint oil. Or, opt for sugar-free gum and mints to stimulate saliva flow.

the history of oral health:

famous people who have lost their teeth



In his first-ever NHL game in 1946, hockey great **Gordie Howe** lost four teeth. They were the only teeth he lost in the 34-year career that followed.

John Lennon had a molar removed in the 1960s. He gave the tooth to his housekeeper, whose family held onto it until 2011, when a Canadian dentist purchased it for more than \$31,000.



readers ask, we answer

Lisa writes:

“I’m a vegetarian. I try to make sure I’m getting all the essential vitamins and nutrients, but I’m worried I may be neglecting my teeth. What should I eat to make sure my mouth stays healthy?”

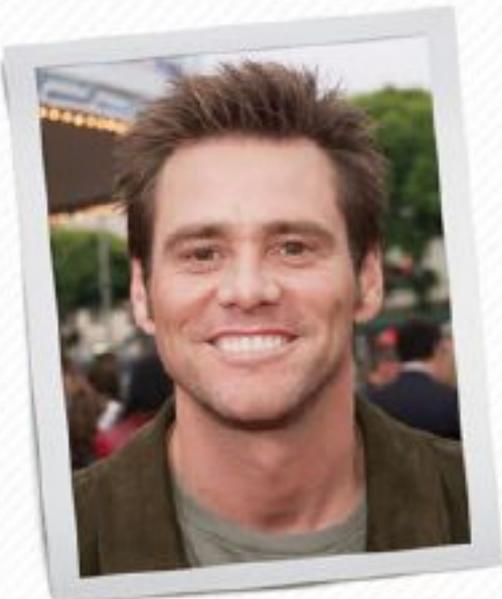
Hi, Lisa. Good question, considering diet is an integral part of oral and overall health. Meat, fish and poultry do contain nutrients that are important for good oral health. But as long as you get those nutrients in adequate amounts from other sources, you’re fine. Here’s what you need and where to find it:

Calcium. Calcium helps build strong teeth and bones, including your jawbone. Some of the best sources of calcium are completely vegetarian *and* vegan-friendly: dark leafy greens, broccoli and tofu. Milk, cereal and cheese also contain this bone-building mineral.

Vitamin D. Because it helps your body process calcium, vitamin D is an essential part of maintaining good oral health. Some types of milk and cereal are fortified with it. Spending a short amount of time in the sun can also help your body produce vitamin D naturally.

If you’ve already adjusted your diet to incorporate these foods but your physician finds that you still lack calcium and vitamin D, you may be advised to take supplements.

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



Jim Carrey removed the cap on a front tooth to make his character in *Dumb and Dumber* (1994) look more authentic. He lost the tooth in grade school, when a classmate jumped on his head during detention.

Similarly **Ed Helms** had a tooth implant removed so he could “lose” a tooth as his character in 2009’s *The Hangover*. He got the implant at age 16, when one of his permanent teeth failed to come in.



mouth-friendly recipe:

low-sugar chocolate chip cookies

Love chocolate chip cookies but don't love all of the sugar? This recipe drastically reduces the sugar while maintaining the taste, making these cookies the perfect way to satisfy your craving.

Ingredients:

1 heaping cup flour
¼ tsp salt
½ tsp baking soda
¼ cup brown sugar
¼ cup sugar
⅔ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 tbsp vegetable oil
¼ cup milk

Directions:

Preheat your oven to 375° F. Combine dry ingredients, including chocolate chips. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Form dough into balls and place on a cookie sheet about an inch apart. Bake for six to seven minutes or until slightly browned. Cool on baking sheet for two minutes, then move to a wire rack. Enjoy with a glass of cold milk!

on topic with dr. kohn

Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Policy, Bill Kohn, DDS. Formerly the director of the Division of Oral Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Kohn has timely tips and valuable insights to share as our resident dental expert.



Ah, the sweet life! It's the holiday season, and we are surrounded by sweet treats. As oral health experts we often talk about the damaging effect frequent and excess sugar consumption can have on teeth. But it's also important to remember that moderating sugar intake is key to overall health as well.

Eating simple carbohydrates in the form of sugar will provide fast fuel for your brain and muscles. However, one candy cane and a cup of real hot chocolate already exceed the American Heart Association's recommended daily limit for added sugar consumption. The problem with eating too many sweets is they usually provide no other essential vitamins or minerals, and the excess sugar is turned into fat, which often adds to the waistline.

So enjoy the holiday season, including the many great things to eat. Keep moderation in mind, however, and make sure you exercise enough to burn the excess calories. And, as always, don't forget to brush and floss!



ORAL HEALTH APPS YOU CAN DOWNLOAD

We totally admit it: We take our smartphones to the bathroom. But not for the reason you may be thinking! With oral-health-related apps, such as toothbrush timers that keep your kids brushing for the recommended two minutes, smartphones can educate and entertain at the same time.

If you're buying smartphones or a tablet for your family this holiday season (or simply want to update your current device with new activities), check out these free oral health apps that will keep you and your kids smiling.

Continued on next page.



DELTA DENTAL MOBILE

Available for iPhone® and Android™

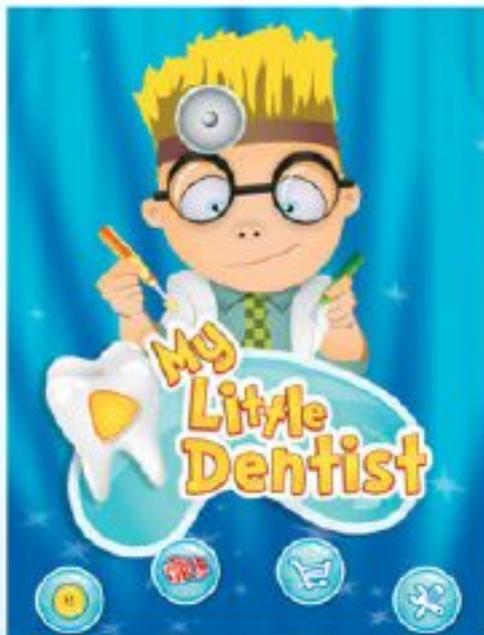
Our mobile app gives Delta Dental enrollees access to recent claims and coverage information from the convenience of their phones when they log in. Enrollees can also access a copy of their ID cards. Looking for a Delta Dental dentist? Our app can find one for you. Bonus: Our app features a toothbrush timer that plays music while you – and your kids – brush for the recommended two minutes.



MY LITTLE DENTIST

Available for iPhone, iPad® and Android

Become a virtual dentist! Choose the proper tools to treat a variety of patients for oral health ailments ranging from bad breath to cavities. You can even use the water and suction tools, which is a fun way to help your child become familiar with instruments that might be used during a checkup.





MIGHTY BRACE™

Available for iPhone and iPad

For kids or adults with braces, Mighty Brace is a fun and engaging tool that lets you practice how to properly take care of your teeth. If your dentist has the app, you can even send photos and questions directly to him or her.



DR. SPARKLY SMILEY

Available for iPhone and iPad

Dr. Sparkly Smiley helps your kids understand what to expect at a dental visit. From reclining in the dental chair to counting teeth and even picking out a prize at the end, this app is great for setting expectations and helping your child feel comfortable about an upcoming appointment.



the psychology of smiling

Seasonal blues getting you down? Start smiling. It may sound trite, but even a fake smile has been proven to raise spirits.

fake it 'til you make it

A smile is possible because of the zygomatic major, a muscle that contracts at the sides of the mouth. Studies suggest that when you smile, even insincerely, the mind registers an improvement in mood because it responds to the body's actions. If the brain senses the zygomatic major flexing, it interprets this as happiness and creates that emotion.

live long and smile

In addition to improving happiness, smiling may even prolong your life. A study of professional baseball players showed those who smiled genuinely in their 1952 yearbook pictures were only half as likely to pass away in any given year versus those who didn't. The intensity of the smile could explain 35 percent of the variability, providing some evidence that smiling is linked to people living longer.

million-dollar mouth

Another interesting fact discovered by a group of British researchers: One smile can generate the same level of brain stimulation as 2,000 bars of chocolate. Furthermore, that same smile can also produce stimulation on par with receiving \$25,000 in cash. If you want to skip the calories *and* feel like you've gotten rich quick, try a smile on for size.

The bottom line: If you're feeling blue, start flashing your pearly whites. The physiological and emotional effects you get from a forced smile may eventually turn it into a real one.





2013: the year in dental

Thanks to technological advances and research, we learn more about teeth and oral health every year. From surprising details about our ancient ancestors to technology futuristic enough to nearly be sci-fi, 2013 was full of fascinating oral health discoveries. Here are some of our favorites.

Continued on next page.

**WANT TO PREVENT CAVITIES?
REACH FOR SOME
CHEESE!**



Most dairy products contain calcium, which helps build strong bones and teeth.

But eating cheese, specifically, can also increase saliva production and raise pH levels in the mouth enough to help “rinse” teeth and rid them of excess acids and bacteria. All it takes to get your saliva flowing is a 1/3-ounce serving. Try a non-fat or low-fat cheese variety to gain saliva benefits without the extra calories.

Neolithic Era dentists were hard to come by.

As if being a Neolithic shepherd didn't come with enough problems, recent research on Otzi, the famously preserved ice mummy from about 3300 B.C., shows that he suffered from serious periodontal disease and tooth decay. The decay is attributed to the rise of agriculture during this period: Otzi likely ate more starchy foods such as porridge and bread. Though the mummy is thousands of years old, it's evident that Otzi also suffered some trauma to a front tooth and chipped a molar.

Alligators may hold the secret to teeth regeneration.

We may learn something from alligators' famously scary smiles. These reptiles grow 2,000 to 3,000 teeth throughout a lifetime, and scientists believe they've figured out how. At the base of each alligator tooth is a tiny pocket of stem cells that sit in a layer of tissue, called lamina. Humans have this tissue, too, but it becomes inactive after we develop adult teeth. If scientists can figure out how alligators' lamina tissue stays active, they may someday be able to replicate this process for human tooth regeneration.



Bioteeth just around the corner?

If the alligator tooth studies don't work out, there may be bioteeth. Experts have been able to help mice create new teeth by implanting a combination of cells into their mouths. Mice have successfully grown enamel, the hard outer coating of the tooth; dentin, the hard inner layer; and even tooth roots. However, don't stop taking great care of your existing teeth just yet. Scientists say that application in humans is still years away.



Dental impressions go digital.

Thanks to new digital technology, biting into a dental mold may be a thing of the past. A new impression system captures more than 3,000 3-D images per second, then combines them to create a perfect, customized mouth impression. Though the technology isn't widespread, we'll keep our fingers crossed that dentists' familiar "tray of goop" may soon be ancient history.

You won't regret this tattoo.

Researchers at Princeton University are working on a technology that "tattoos" a tiny sensor onto tooth enamel. The sensor monitors bacteria types and levels in the mouth and can alert dentists when levels become too high. By detecting abnormal levels or types of bacteria or viruses early, saliva sensors may be able to help dentists and doctors uncover medical problems such as gum disease, stomach ulcers and even AIDS.



What new oral health research and technologies will come our way in 2014? It's hard to say – but while we wait, daily flossing and basic brushing with fluoride toothpaste remain tried and true techniques to maintain good oral health for years to come.

5 tips to keep teeth healthy over the holidays

No matter how much you love your dentist, he or she probably doesn't top the list of people you want to spend quality time with over the holidays. Follow these five tips to steer clear of emergency trips to the dentist's office this season.



1 Don't crack nuts with your teeth.

Although protein found in nuts helps keep muscles and bones strong, you shouldn't test the strength of your teeth by shelling nuts with them. The hard surface of most nutshells can cause serious tooth and gum damage, and may even crack teeth. Your safest bet? Shell nuts *before* snacking on them – and leave cracking to a pro.



2 Pass on chewy treats.

Holiday candy platters are often loaded with treats that can harm your teeth. Sticky substances cling to tooth enamel and encourage tooth decay, and thick candies, such as caramel and taffy, can even yank out fillings. Eat these sweets sparingly and along with other foods to help keep the treats from sticking to your teeth.

3 Use proper tools to open packages and bottles.

We know you're excited to rip into that gift from your great aunt, but your teeth are not the right tools for the task. Gripping a package or stubborn bottle cap with your teeth can crack them, possibly requiring a root canal and a crown. Give your mouth a great gift – reach for scissors or a bottle opener instead.



4 Avoid chewing on hard candy or ice cubes.

Crunching on ice or hard candy can lead to cracked or chipped teeth, which are painful – and pricey to treat. Whether you’re enjoying a sweet or finishing the ice in your cocktail, let it dissolve naturally in your mouth. Chewing on hard objects puts too much stress on teeth.



5 Say “no” to nail biting.

It’s no secret that the holidays can be stressful, but biting your nails won’t bring relief. Anxious nibbling is bad for fingernails *and* teeth. Experts have linked the habit to teeth grinding, clenching, jaw problems, facial pain and sensitive teeth. If you get the urge to chew, distract yourself for a minute or two and see if the feeling goes away. If that doesn’t work, consider buying bitter-tasting polish that’s designed to dissuade you from putting your nails anywhere near your mouth.

Be sure to check these tips twice to stay off your dentist’s naughty list this season!

two-word answers

Q: When is the best time to eat sweets?



A: With meals.





keeping you covered: what's your score?

With our new online risk assessment tool, you can receive a full oral health report to share with your dentist in just minutes.

Oral health problems, such as periodontal disease and tooth decay, are more common than you might think. If left untreated they can lead to more serious problems, including tooth loss. Use our assessment tool to help determine whether your oral health is at risk. After answering a few confidential questions, you can print your assessment to share with your dentist at your next visit.

[Estimate your dental score](#) today. It's an easy way to get wise about your oral health.

