

# grin!

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

spring/  
summer

2013

volume 2, issue 1

**how fluoridated  
water helps  
prevent tooth decay**

**5 oral health  
tips for  
expectant mothers**

**beat the heat  
without hurting  
your teeth**

**tooth fairy financials:  
results of the 2012 poll**



# grin!

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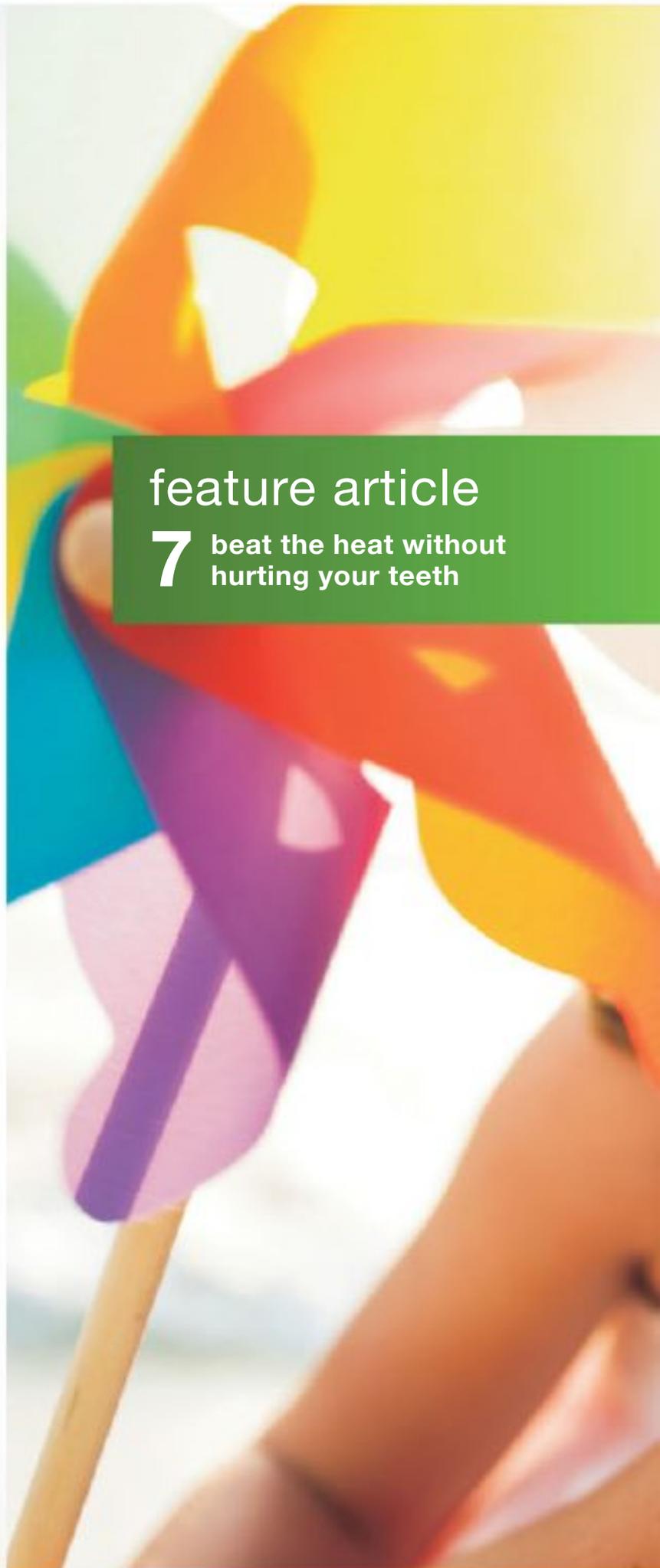
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# cavity-free calendar

## April

### **Alcohol Awareness Month.**

People who drink too much alcohol can have an increased risk for oral cancer. If you drink alcohol, keep consumption moderate — no more than a drink a day for women and two per day for men.

**See Page 6** for more about oral cancer and alcohol.

## May

### **National Pregnancy Awareness Month.**

If you're expecting to hear a certain pitter-patter soon, **see Page 13** to find out how pregnancy can affect oral health.

## June

### **National Smile Month.**

Use it as an excuse to flash your pearly whites more than usual.

## July

### **National Ice Cream Day is July 18!**

**Check out Page 7** to see how you can celebrate the sweet treat and keep your teeth cavity-free.



# teens and teeth whitening

Teeth whitening is a \$600 million industry and growing up to 20% each year. A large part of the market comes from image-conscious teens who are going online or flocking to malls for do-it-yourself teeth whitening kits.

The Academy of General Dentistry advises teens to wait to use whitening procedures until at least age 14. The tooth's pulp is fully formed then, which means a teen will experience less sensitivity from teeth whitening.

## You can take several approaches to whiten your smile:

- Bleaching\* (at-home or in-office) is a common and popular chemical process. Consult your dentist before using over-the-counter bleaching solutions, which alter the intrinsic color of teeth.
- Although all toothpastes help remove surface stains through mild abrasives,

whitening toothpastes have special chemical or polishing agents that provide additional stain removal and do not alter the intrinsic color of teeth.

## Take preventive action to help keep your teeth white and sparkling:

- Avoid nicotine, soda, tea and coffee.
- If you drink soda or coffee, use a straw to prevent discoloration of the upper front teeth.
- Clean teeth carefully, especially if you wear braces. Food particles can become trapped, causing discoloration and cavities.

\*Teeth whitening procedures are not typically covered under Delta Dental plans; always check your coverage before undergoing dental treatment.

## the history of oral health:

### the tooth worm and other oral health myths

#### Clipping fingernails

on Friday will make a toothache go away until the following Friday.



Placing a **hard-boiled egg** somewhere in a baby's nursery will ease teething pain.

Using **donkey's milk as a mouthwash** will make gums and teeth stronger.

Germans thought that **kissing a donkey** would relieve a toothache.



# readers ask, we answer

Nadine writes:

**“My first granddaughter is 2 months old. Should we start some type of gum or teeth cleaning now? If not, at what age?”**

Hi, Nadine. It’s never too early to start oral health care! Even before your granddaughter has teeth, gums can be wiped off with a clean, damp cloth after feedings to prevent bacteria buildup. It’s also a good way to get your granddaughter used to having her teeth cleaned after eating.

When her first tooth comes in, it’s time to invest in a soft, infant-size toothbrush! Just as with adults, her teeth should be cleaned twice a day. She won’t need fluoride toothpaste until she’s able to spit it out — probably sometime around age 2. Until then, water or training toothpaste will work just fine. If she ends up being at high risk for tooth decay, however, her dentist may recommend starting fluoride toothpaste earlier.

Speaking of dentists, your granddaughter should have her first dental appointment by the time she’s a year old or within six months after her first tooth comes in. You’ll also want to start flossing for her when she gets two teeth that touch to make sure those baby teeth stay in tip-top condition. **Enjoy your new grandbaby!**

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



**Spitting in a frog’s mouth** relieves toothaches. Putting a whole frog on the side of the face with the toothache also helps.



**Smearing honey on teeth** relieves a toothache by enticing the tooth worms into coming out. (At least that’s what ancient people believed.)

European settlers in North America felt that a toothache could be cured by **holding a roasted onion to the wrist** on the opposite side of the tooth.



## mouth-friendly recipe: **juicy swirl popsicles**

*Cool down with these healthy, calcium-packed pops.*

### **Ingredients:**

8-oz. low-sugar juice of your choice  
½ cup plain or vanilla Greek yogurt  
Popsicle sticks

### **Directions:**

Fill two-thirds of ice pop molds or small paper cups with the juice. Top with about two tablespoons of yogurt or until the molds or cups are full, then swirl the juice and yogurt together with a knife or chopstick. Insert popsicle sticks and freeze for eight hours. Makes about eight pops.



## 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.*

Each year, about 35,000 Americans are diagnosed with oral cancer, a largely preventable type of cancer that affects the mouth and/or part of the throat. Most oral cancers are related to tobacco use, excessive alcohol use or both. You can help reduce your risk for oral cancer by avoiding all tobacco products and drinking alcohol only in moderation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines “moderation” as, on average, one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. Excessive alcohol use can have other health risks, including unintentional injuries from risky behaviors, violence and acute alcohol poisoning. Additionally, expecting mothers who abuse alcohol may experience miscarriages and/or stillbirths or put their babies at risk for physical or mental birth defects.



# **BEAT** *the* **HEAT** **WITHOUT HURTING YOUR TEETH**

There are many ways to beat the heat in the summer: spending a little time in the pool, making the most of your air-conditioning or enjoying a few cold treats. Though they may be refreshing, some summer snacks may not be the best for your teeth. Here are a few ways cold treats may be harming your oral health even though they're helping you cool off. Plus, learn how you can help offset the damage.



### *The problem:* **MILKSHAKES AND SMOOTHIES CAUSE TOOTH SENSITIVITY**

Nothing tastes better than slurping a cold, creamy milkshake when the mercury rises — and not much feels worse than the sharp pain you sometimes get in your teeth immediately afterward. Cold sensitivity in teeth is usually caused by exposed dentin (the inner layer of the tooth) or exposed root surfaces. Enamel usually covers dentin, but when this enamel wears away or decays, the dentin is left vulnerable to things such as the startling cold of ice cream. Exposed root surfaces can result from too vigorous brushing or from periodontal (gum) disease. Tooth sensitivity can also be caused by tooth grinding, whitening toothpastes and bleaching treatments.

Your dentist should be able to help you determine the cause of any tooth sensitivity. Fairly simple fixes include using a mouthguard to prevent nighttime grinding, or cutting back on whitening treatments. Desensitizing toothpastes and mouthwashes may be recommended as well. If the problem is caused by tooth decay or gum disease, fillings and periodontal treatments could be required.

### *The problem:* **COLD FOODS AND DRINKS CAUSE BRAIN FREEZE**

We've all experienced the acute stabbing feeling you get in your brain when you've scarfed down something cold too fast. In a 2012 study, scientists discovered that brain freeze is likely caused by an abrupt increase in blood flow to an artery in the brain that supplies oxygen to the frontal lobes. This happens in response to sudden cold stimuli

(such as ice cream or even a cold drink). The sharp pain disappears when the artery constricts again. Researchers theorize that it's the brain's attempt to protect itself from getting too cold, and the artery constricting may be a way to bring the resulting brain pressure back down to normal levels.



### *The problem:* **SUGARY ICE CREAMS CAN CAUSE TOOTH DECAY**

Dairy products, such as ice cream, are good sources of calcium, which can be great for your teeth and bones. The problem with most ice cream, however, is that it's made with a lot of tooth-decay-causing sugar. (That's what makes it so sticky when it melts.) Your best bet is sugar-free or low-sugar ice cream. If you do opt for the full-sugar version, there are a few ways to lessen the damage it does to your teeth:

- Enjoying ice cream at the end of a meal is better than eating it alone as a snack. Eating other foods increases saliva production, so ice cream as dessert means the excess saliva from those other foods will help food particles get rinsed out of the mouth faster. Excess saliva also helps neutralize acid production.
- Brush teeth immediately afterward or at least rinse with water or mouthwash to get some of the sticky sugars dislodged from the enamel.
- Avoid ice creams with sticky add-ins such as caramel or toffee. They cling to teeth more fiercely than other foods and are harder to rinse off, especially without a toothbrush.

HOW  
*fluoridated*  
**WATER**  
HELPS PREVENT  
*tooth decay*



You may not realize it, but you're likely giving your teeth small doses of cavity-preventing fluoride all day. The coffee you made with water from your kitchen sink, the quick cup of H<sub>2</sub>O you got from the faucet, the tap water you boiled pasta in — if your community water is fluoridated, all of those things can help protect your teeth.



## WATER FLUORIDATION: ONE OF THE GREATEST PUBLIC HEALTH ACHIEVEMENTS

Since U.S. cities began adding fluoride to water supplies more than 65 years ago, tooth decay has decreased dramatically. This result led the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to name water fluoridation as one of the Ten Great Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century.

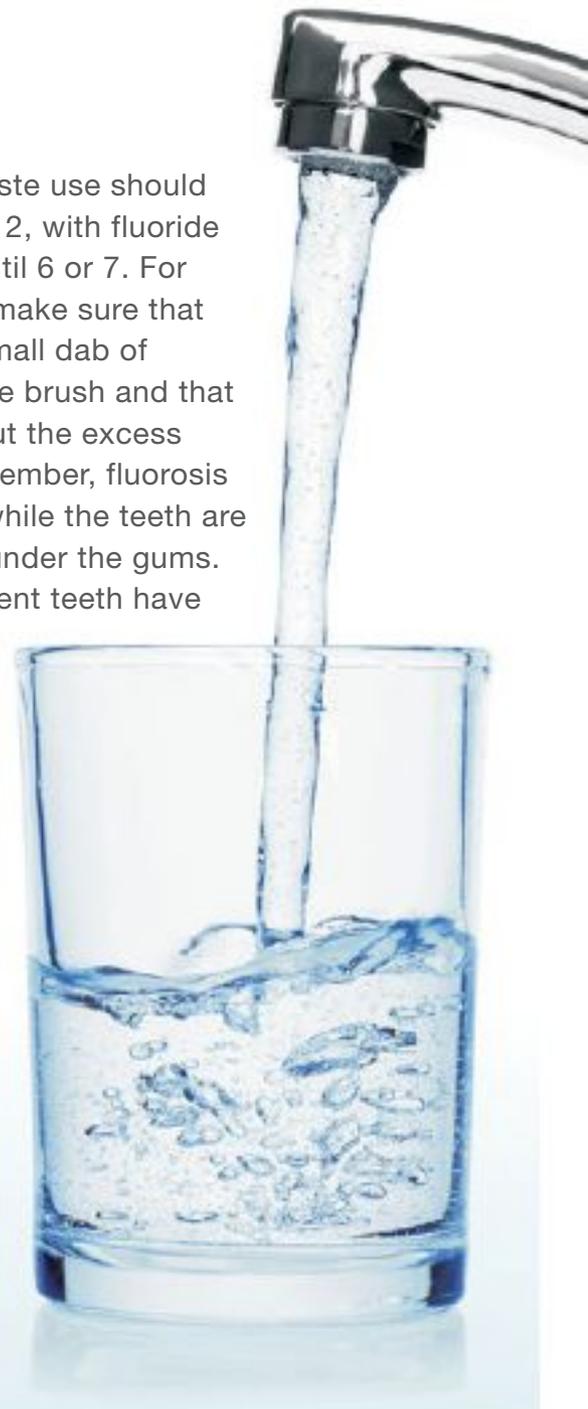


## TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

As the saying goes, yes, you can have too much of a good thing. For children, that's true even when it comes to fluoride. When kids ingest too much fluoride while their permanent teeth are developing underneath the gums, it can lead to a condition called dental fluorosis. In most cases, this results in faint white spots or streaks on the crowns of one or more permanent teeth. This is purely a cosmetic condition and usually is barely noticeable. In a very small number of children, the spots can be yellow or brownish discolorations (moderate or severe fluorosis). Fortunately, the amount of fluoride in community water supplies isn't enough to cause moderate or severe fluorosis. However, if combined with the fluoride toothpaste that small children tend to swallow when learning to brush their teeth, it could be. Simple precautions can eliminate this problem. Kids younger than 2 have poor swallowing reflexes and don't typically understand that toothpaste or mouthwash needs to be spit into the sink.

Though many areas in the U.S. fluoridate their water supplies, not all do. If your community is part of the latter group and you have children, talk with your dentist to see if your children would benefit from fluoride drops.

Fluoride toothpaste use should start around age 2, with fluoride rinses waiting until 6 or 7. For young children, make sure that there is only a small dab of toothpaste on the brush and that the child spits out the excess toothpaste. Remember, fluorosis can only occur while the teeth are still developing under the gums. Once all permanent teeth have erupted, usually by age 12, fluorosis is no longer a concern.





## INFANTS AND FLUORIDE

When it comes to feeding an infant, breastfeeding is the best choice for many reasons. For nearly all infants, breastfeeding is the best source of infant nutrition and immunologic protection. It provides remarkable health benefits to mothers as well.

In recent years, the American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have uncovered new information about the potential for mild fluorosis from concentrated

infant formula preparations mixed with fluoridated community water. Because powdered and liquid formulas contain small amounts of fluoride, mixing these with fluoridated water for use over a long period of time slightly increases the risk of mild fluorosis. It's okay to use fluoridated tap water, but if you're concerned about the risk of fluorosis, switch to low-fluoride bottled water at least some of the time. These bottled waters are labeled as deionized, purified, demineralized or distilled.



## WHY IT WORKS

So why does fluoride do what it does? Fluoride is a trace element that plays a significant role in remineralizing teeth. It combines with key minerals, such as calcium and phosphate, to replace minerals that acids from plaque and bacteria have taken out. Fluoride can also be absorbed into tooth enamel, making it stronger and better able to ward off attacks from harmful acids in the future.

If you prefer bottled water as opposed to tap, you may be doing your teeth a disservice. How? You're preventing them from getting added fluoride, since most bottled waters don't contain any. If you like the taste of bottled water but want the added benefits of tap, consider getting a filter for your faucet. It makes your water taste better, and most filters allow water to retain the fluoride. The next time you need a little hydration, head to the faucet. You'll quench your thirst, save money *and* help protect your teeth.

# 5 Oral Health Tips for Expectant Mothers

*As any woman who has been pregnant can tell you, there are many health changes that come with carrying a baby. Oral health is no exception. Here are five things to know if you (or your significant other) are expecting.*

1

**Be aware of pregnancy gingivitis symptoms.** Expectant mothers experience hormone changes that can exaggerate the way gum tissue reacts to plaque. If that plaque isn't removed, it may eventually cause gingivitis, the first stage of periodontal disease. This can even lead to bone loss around the teeth. Symptoms include gums that become swollen and bleed easily when brushed. Pay extra attention to getting rid of plaque while pregnant to avoid problems.

2

**Don't ignore dry mouth.** Dry mouth is a pretty common side effect during pregnancy, but it's not one to take lightly. Good saliva flow helps cleanse your mouth of food particles and bacteria. Without saliva, those harmful things linger in your mouth and increase your risk for tooth decay and gum disease. Stay hydrated, and pay close attention to good oral hygiene habits such as brushing with a fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day and flossing regularly.

3

**Pregnancy "tumors" are nothing to worry about.** Good news: Though these sound scary, they're just benign growths — not actually tumors — that result from swollen gums. Typically, they go away on their own.

4

**It's safe to see the dentist when pregnant.** Women who are trying to become pregnant should see their dentists regularly. If you become pregnant and haven't had a cleaning in the past year, it's recommended you see your dentist during the first trimester for a dental cleaning and guidance on maintaining your oral health during your pregnancy. If dental work is needed, the second trimester is the safest time to get it done. If a dental emergency happens in the third trimester, the mom-to-be should consult her obstetrician before moving forward with any procedures.

5

**X-rays should be avoided, but are acceptable, if necessary.** Any procedure that can wait until after the baby is born — including X-rays — should. But emergencies happen; and when they do, dentists will take great care to expose moms-to-be to the lowest amount of radiation possible by protecting the woman's neck and lap with a lead apron.





# Tooth Fairy FINANCIALS:

## RESULTS OF THE 2012 POLL

Every year, Delta Dental asks parents to answer a very important question: "How much money did the Tooth Fairy leave under the pillow at your house?" More than 1,200 parents responded last year and told us that 2012 was a banner year for U.S. children shedding baby teeth.

**\$2.42**

THE AVERAGE AMOUNT  
*children received*  
**UNDER THEIR PILLOWS**



IN 2012.

UP 15.2% FROM A MERE \$2.10 IN 2011.

**CASH IS STILL KING.**



THE TOOTH FAIRY LEFT MONEY IN  
*98% of homes* THAT SHE VISITED.

Only **2%** received something  
OF CHILDREN *other than cash.*

THOSE GIFTS INCLUDED TOOTHBRUSHES,  
TOOTHPASTE, SMALL TOYS AND GUM.



She's a **workaholic!** THE TOOTH FAIRY VISITED



**90%** OF HOMES WITH CHILDREN WHO *lost a tooth.*

The most common amount left BY THE *Tooth Fairy* WAS



IN 46% OF HOMES  
The *Tooth Fairy*  
LEFT AN AVERAGE OF



22% OF KIDS RECEIVED A  
**PIGGY-BANK-FILLING \$5**  
*for each tooth lost!*

To learn more about the Tooth Fairy and take the poll,  
visit [TheOriginalToothFairyPoll.com](http://TheOriginalToothFairyPoll.com)

 DELTA DENTAL

# brushing up



Ever wonder what your dentist is *really* thinking? *Grin!* wanted to find out, too, so we talked to **Dr. Steve Bruce.**

**What's the best dental advice you've ever received?** Treat every patient as if he or she is family.

**Do you brush and floss as much as you recommend?** Yes, and occasionally I brush too vigorously. You would think a dentist would know better.

**Any funny stories from the dental chair?** When I was in dental school, one of my first patients was an elderly Irish gentleman who walked with a cane and got around very slowly but still had a sparkle in his eye. In reviewing his medical history, I asked him if he had ever had rheumatic fever. He smiled at me and responded, "Yes, son, I have been in love several times."

**Do you have a favorite floss flavor?** Cinnamon.

**Do you prefer an electric or manual toothbrush?** Electric.

**What dental problem do you see the most in your office?**

Gingivitis. The sad thing is that it's so easily preventable, in most cases.

**Do you have any cavities?** No, but I do have several fillings.

**If you could tell patients to stop doing one thing, what would it be?**

Stop procrastinating. This applies to preventive care, making regular appointments and completing necessary treatment.

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

## keeping you covered

*Is your dental insurance Explanation of Benefits a little confusing? We'll help you decipher it, one term at a time.*

**Coordination of Benefits:** If you're entitled to benefits from more than one group dental plan, the amounts paid by the combined plans will not exceed 100 percent of your dental expenses. This is known as Coordination of Benefits, or COB.