

# grin!®



Your heart and  
your mouth:

MORE CONNECTED  
THAN YOU KNOW

Trying the keto diet? Be aware of this embarrassing side effect.

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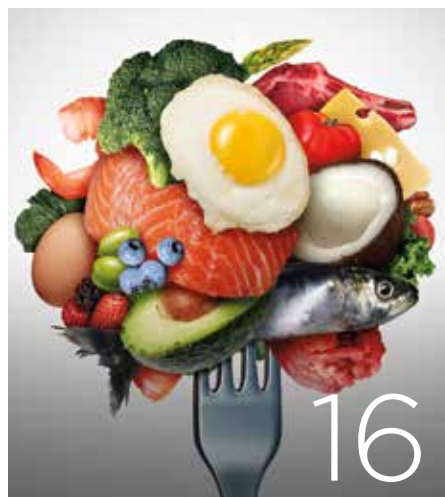
The vital facts about vitamins

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5 ways to care for your smile when planning for a transplant

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**grin!**

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**grin!** more

Visit the *Grin!* website for more ways to keep your smile healthy.



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DENTAL BENEFITS



True facts about false teeth

While total tooth loss is on the decline, dentures still provide millions of Americans with a way to restore their smiles. Learn about the types of dentures and how to care for them.

LIFESTYLE



Prepping for a lifetime of  
healthy smiles

From learning the right way to brush and floss to eating healthy snacks, find out how to help your children develop good oral health habits.

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## On topic with Dr. Dill

### Your medicine may damage your smile.

The medicine you take to help fix one health problem may also pose risks to your oral health.

One of the most common side effects listed on both prescription and over-the-counter medicine is dry mouth. In fact, more than 500 medications can cause dry mouth,<sup>1</sup> including those taken for allergies, asthma, anxiety and depression.

Dry mouth can be more than uncomfortable. It can increase your risk of tooth decay, gum disease and mouth infection. That's because saliva is your body's best defense against these issues. To temporarily relieve dryness, try drinking more water and chewing sugar-free gum.

But dry mouth may not be the only problem you're experiencing.

#### Other oral side effects of medication include:

- Canker sores or cold sores
- Swelling of your gums
- A metallic, salty or bitter taste
- Tooth decay from sugar in some medicine
- Staining of your teeth

If you experience adverse side effects — such as severe dry mouth — check with your physician, who may be able to prescribe a different medicine for you. The likelihood of these side effects increases if you take multiple medications, are undergoing chemotherapy or recently had an organ transplant (see pages 18-19 for more on oral health and transplants).

Be sure to talk with your dentist about what's going on with your health, including what medications you are taking. That way, you can work together to ease the side effects of medication and protect your smile. ■



Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Network Strategy, Joseph Dill, DDS. With more than 30 years of experience in the dental field, including eight in private practice and 16 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

<sup>1</sup>American Dental Association

## Mouth-friendly recipe: seafood-stuffed mushrooms

Looking for the perfect finger food to serve to friends and family? Mushrooms are not only low in calories — they're also considered a superfood packed with vitamins B and D, protein and fiber. Filled with shrimp, crab and gooey cheese, these delicious, bite-size gourmet treats are sure to be a crowd-pleaser.

#### Ingredients:

- 6 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 can (6 ounces) crab meat, drained
- 1 cup cooked shrimp, finely chopped
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 30-36 large white button mushrooms, washed and with stems removed
- Scallions

#### Directions:

- ① Preheat oven to 375 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- ② Combine all ingredients except mushrooms and scallions in a large mixing bowl. Stir gently until well combined.
- ③ Press filling into center of mushrooms with a spoon, creating a small mound on each mushroom.
- ④ Place stuffed mushrooms on prepared baking sheet and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
- ⑤ Bake mushrooms for 20 minutes or until golden brown.
- ⑥ Let mushrooms rest for 5 minutes. Garnish with scallions.
- ⑦ Enjoy! ■

Shrimp and crab are great sources of phosphorus, which together with calcium help build strong teeth and bones.

Mushrooms boost immunity, helping protect your mouth and body against bacteria, infection and disease.



# History of oral health: the vital facts about vitamins

Your body needs plenty of calcium, phosphorus, and vitamins A, C and D to keep your teeth and gums healthy. Ultimately, it's best to get these nutrients through a healthy diet. But a majority of American adults still take vitamins or supplements to help improve or maintain their health.<sup>1</sup> Here's a look at some interesting facts about vitamins.

1912

Polish-born biochemist Casimir Funk found that some diseases are caused by the body lacking certain chemical substances, which he named vitamins.



1968

Popular Flintstones vitamins were introduced in the shape of eight characters but did not include Betty until 1995. Manufacturers said she looked too similar to Wilma. Plus, her thin waist caused her vitamin to break during production.



Editorial credit: Lost\_in\_the\_Midwest / Shutterstock.com

1940s

Americans could more readily buy multivitamins and mineral supplements to meet the recommended amount of nutrients they need each day for a healthy diet.



2012

Marketers of gummy vitamins started targeting adults. By 2016, these gummies accounted for nearly 8% of the nation's \$6 billion in multivitamin sales.<sup>2</sup> Some gummy vitamins contain up to 8 grams (the equivalent of 2 teaspoons) of sugar.



There's still debate on how beneficial vitamins are — unless you have a nutritional deficiency or a risk of one. To protect your teeth, avoid these vitamins:

- Varieties that contain sugar
- Sticky or chewy kinds like gummies
- Acidic ones like vitamin C tablets ■

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<sup>2</sup>Nutrition Business Journal and IBISWorld



## Readers ask, we answer

Sandy asks:  
"What does drinking tea do for my smile?"

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.

Hi, Sandy! Tea — especially green tea — may provide numerous benefits to your oral and overall health.

Studies show tea may help prevent cavities by reducing the bacteria and decay-causing acid produced in your mouth. Both green and black tea also contain fluoride that can help ward off tooth decay. Using fluoridated tap water in your tea can add to the fluoride you're getting with each sip.

Tea also has polyphenols, micronutrients from plant-based foods, that can help you avoid gum inflammation and disease. And one study showed that drinking green tea may even help combat bad breath by reducing sulfur compounds in your mouth.

Beyond the benefits to your oral health, tea — especially green tea — can be great for your whole body. It's rich in antioxidants, which are linked to lowered risk for illnesses and diseases, including heart disease and diabetes. Research even shows that green tea may help slow the growth of certain kinds of cancer, including oral cancer.

Drinking tea can be a nice addition to an overall healthy diet that includes whole grains, fish, fruits and vegetables. Just be aware that:

- Tea can stain your teeth because it contains tannin, the yellowish or brownish substance found in plants that gives tea its color. Brushing your teeth or rinsing your mouth after drinking tea can help reduce staining.
- Adding excess lemon, sugar or honey to hot or iced tea can also erode your teeth and make you more prone to cavities. For the best health benefits, unsweetened or sugar-free tea is the way to go. ■

grin!

LIFESTYLE



# Share a smile by giving back

When we choose to give to others, we all feel great. Research shows that acts of kindness bring us more happiness and better health.

Across the nation, Americans gave \$428 billion to charity in 2018.<sup>1</sup> But money isn't the only way to give. Children and families also need food, clothing, books and toys. Some of the most overlooked items include toiletries such as toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss.

The need for better oral health care is growing. The U.S. Surgeon General has called tooth decay a "silent epidemic" in our nation. Dental problems are creating a serious setback for millions of Americans — resulting in missed school and work, a loss of productivity, trouble concentrating and lower grades.

ABOUT 47,600,000

Americans are not getting the dental care they need, largely due to financial barriers.<sup>2</sup>

THAT'S MORE THAN 15%

of the population, including millions of children.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Philanthropic Trust  
<sup>2</sup>National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research  
<sup>3</sup>American Dental Association

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LIFESTYLE

You can make a difference and make someone smile. Here are some ways to give back to the community:



**1** **Donate** toothbrushes, fluoride toothpaste, mouthwash and floss to local homeless shelters.



**2** **Help** stock your local food pantry with items such as canned veggies, nuts and powdered milk.



**3** **Offer** to help a family member or neighbor get to the grocery store.



**4** **Pick up** a healthy meal, such as broccoli cheddar soup, for someone who is under the weather.

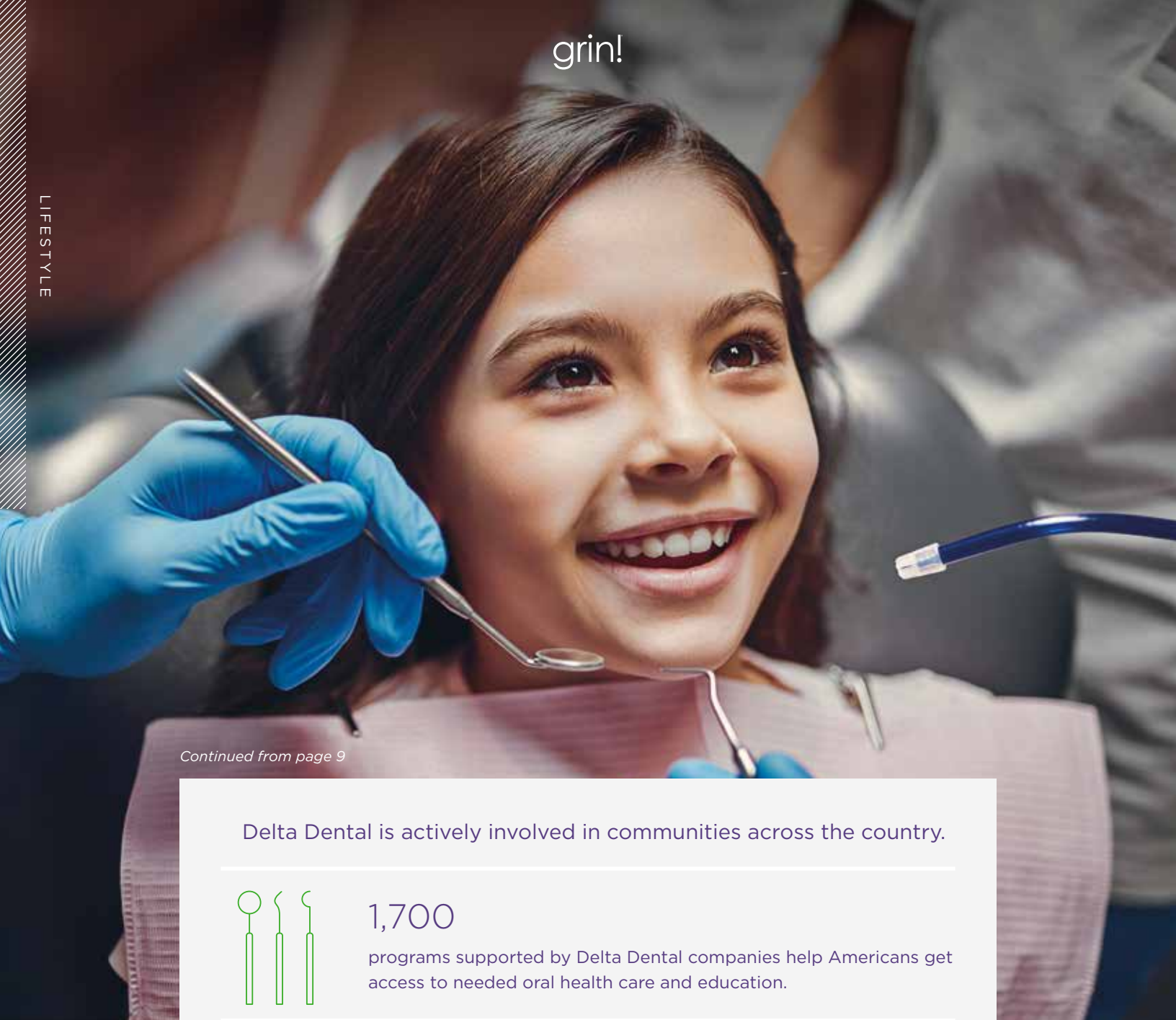


**5** **Give** books to a local library or school to help teach kids about healthy choices.



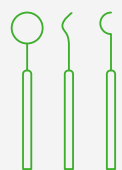
**6** **Volunteer** to take seniors from a local assisted living facility to dental appointments.

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Continued from page 9

Delta Dental is actively involved in communities across the country.



1,700

programs supported by Delta Dental companies help Americans get access to needed oral health care and education.



\$79,000,000

was donated in 2018 by Delta Dental companies nationwide to programs that help improve oral health, expand access to dental care, prevent dental disease and educate about the oral-overall health connection.

If you or someone you know needs free or low-cost dental care, check with your local dental associations or community health centers to see what's available. And if you're able, give back this year. By helping one another, we bring joy to ourselves and more healthy, happy smiles to the world. ■

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## Two-word answers



Q:

Can using a pacifier cause dental problems? Yes, eventually.

A:

Sucking on a pacifier or thumb helps young children feel calm, relaxed, safe, comfortable and secure. The action triggers a calming reflex that begins in the womb.

It's recommended that your children suck on a pacifier instead of their thumb because it's an easier habit to break. Research also shows that pacifiers can reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

But using a pacifier or sucking on a thumb for too many years can lead to developmental problems for your children's mouths and teeth. Their growing jaws begin to form around anything held in their mouths repeatedly.

These problems, often called "pacifier teeth," may:

- Push children's top front teeth forward so they no longer meet with bottom teeth
- Cause teeth to become crooked and create problems with biting
- Result in changes to the roof of the mouth, position of teeth and jaw alignment

Be sure to take your children to the dentist by age 1 to check on their development and bite. Preventive exams are 100% covered by most dental plans.

Lengthy pacifier use can also lead to speech impediments. It's best to wean your children from a pacifier by the time they're 2 years old, before you begin seeing effects on their developing teeth and mouths. More dental problems might surface if your children keep using a pacifier past their fourth birthday.

Here are some helpful tips for weaning:

Praise your children for not using a pacifier.

Offer tooth-friendly rewards for pacifier-free days.

Comfort them with hugs to help reduce anxiety. ■

# Your heart and your mouth: ----- MORE CONNECTED THAN YOU KNOW



WELLNESS

WELLNESS

When it comes to the connection between your head and your heart, look no further than your mouth.

Numerous studies show a link between poor oral health and an increased risk of heart disease. In fact, people with periodontal (gum) disease are almost 50% more likely to have a heart attack.<sup>1</sup>

Scientific evidence hasn't yet proven a cause-effect relationship. That means there's no conclusive proof that neglecting your oral health will lead to heart disease or that treating gum disease will reduce your risk of heart disease.

However, we know that both diseases are prevalent across our nation.

MORE THAN **80%**  
of American adults have some form of gum disease.<sup>2</sup>

When your mouth isn't cleaned properly, bacteria causes a sticky buildup (also known as plaque) on teeth and infects surrounding tissues. This leads gums to become red, swollen and tender. Many people don't even realize they have gum disease.

**1 IN 4**  
U.S. deaths stem from heart disease.<sup>3</sup>

Heart disease is the nation's leading cause of death. It involves narrowing or blocking of blood vessels, which can lead to chest pain, a heart attack or stroke. While some dental plans offer expanded coverage (such as additional cleanings) for people with this condition, heart disease is mostly preventable with healthy choices such as a balanced diet, regular exercise, not smoking and limited alcohol use.



WELLNESS

Bacteria and inflammation is a link between gum disease and heart disease. Poor oral health heightens the risk of bacterial infection. Bacteria and toxins from your mouth can spread to your heart and the rest of your body through the blood stream and may contribute to inflammation in your blood vessels. Research also shows that gum disease and heart disease share risk factors such as smoking.

Whether or not there's a direct link between the health of your mouth and your heart, why take a chance? By protecting yourself against gum disease and tooth decay, and avoiding smoking, you can also take care of your heart. ■

<sup>2</sup>American Dental Hygienists' Association  
<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

# Your winter smile list



**1**  
Feel like a kid again by starting a snowball fight.

- ② Dream about taking a vacation — then start making plans!
- ③ Join some friends in singing songs you all know and love.
- ④ Put together a puzzle with more pieces than you've ever tackled before.
- ⑤ Set a new goal: Increase the number of steps you take each day.
- ⑥ Keep warm with some hot tea. Read about the benefits on page 7.
- ⑦ Spread joy by lending a hand at your local food bank or soup kitchen.
- ⑧ Bring the beauty of winter inside by making paper snowflakes.
- ⑨ Cozy up in front of the fireplace in your favorite pair of fuzzy socks.
- ⑩ Shovel snow for someone in need. Find out more about giving back on pages 8-10. ■

LIFESTYLE



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Trying the keto diet?

Be aware of this embarrassing side effect.

Before-and-after photos taking social media by storm show people's weight loss transformation with the keto diet. This increasingly popular low-carb, high-fat diet restricts the intake of carbs — putting your body into a state of ketosis, which burns fat instead of glucose and causes you to lose weight.

But one common side effect you may not have heard about is the bad breath that comes with this diet. Some describe keto breath as having a metallic taste in their mouth and a smell that's sweet, fruity or similar to nail polish remover. This is caused by the chemicals your body creates during ketosis, which are released from the body by exhaling.

#### Don't worry!

Your breath should improve in a few weeks as your body adjusts to the lack of carbs. In the meantime, try these tips for tackling bad breath:

- Drink more water.
- Eat less protein and more complex carbohydrates, such as leafy green veggies.
- Suck on xylitol-sweetened, sugar-free mints or chew sugar-free gum.
- Add natural breath fresheners, such as clove, cinnamon or mint, to your water and tea.

Because fewer carbs means you are having less processed sugar, the keto diet may improve your oral and overall health. Studies show a low-carb diet can help reduce cavities, gum disease and inflammation. Consuming less sugar and fewer processed foods could also lower your risk of heart disease and slow the growth of cancerous tumors.

#### Some potential downsides to the keto diet:

- Eating lots of saturated fats can increase your cholesterol and risk of heart disease.
- Cutting out carbs can also cut out fiber, vitamins and minerals needed for your oral and overall health.
- Beyond bad breath, the keto diet can cause you to feel tired and weak, develop headaches, lose muscle, and experience digestive issues and even heart damage.

**Our verdict:** Check with your dentist and physician before starting a new diet. You could consider something less strict by reducing your carb intake without going full keto. If you do decide to try keto, seek other sources of fiber such as avocados and almonds. Studies show the keto diet can help you lose weight, reduce your sugar intake and improve your overall health. But be ready for potential side effects, including bad breath. ■

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## Seal the deal and protect your teeth

Dental sealants provide one more way to fight against cavities — beyond brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, drinking fluoridated water and flossing daily. This preventive step can help you avoid the much higher cost of fillings or crowns that may be needed if you develop tooth decay — one of the most common chronic diseases in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

**Here's how sealants work:** Your dentist or dental hygienist applies a thin protective coating on the chewing surface of your molars, those teeth in the back of your mouth that can be difficult to reach with a toothbrush. That's where 9 out of 10 cavities occur.<sup>2</sup> The sealants fill in the grooves of those teeth, creating a barrier to keep cavity-causing bacteria out.

Both children and adults who don't already have tooth decay or fillings in their molars can get sealants. They're most effective, however, when applied shortly after a child's permanent molars appear, between the ages of 5 and 14. Sealants are not permanent and must usually be reapplied after several years.

About 1 in 5 children will have untreated tooth decay by the time they're 19,<sup>3</sup> putting them at greater risk for missing school and receiving lower grades. Studies show sealants can be effective in fighting this statistic:

- Sealants protect against 80% of cavities in the back teeth for two years, 50% of cavities for four years and can continue to work for up to nine years.<sup>4</sup>
- Children ages 6 to 11 without sealants are three times more likely to develop cavities in their molars.<sup>5</sup>

ONLY 43%  
of children ages  
6 to 11  
have sealants.<sup>6</sup>

Having sealants applied is quick and painless. The procedure takes only a few minutes per tooth. After your teeth are cleaned and dried, the surface is roughened slightly to make bonding easier. Then, sealants are painted on your enamel, where it bonds and hardens.

Talk with your dentist about when you or your children should get sealants. Many dental plans cover sealants for children under 18, although benefits only include sealants on back teeth. Be aware that adult sealants are not normally covered. Check with your plan for details on whether sealants and reapplications are covered. ■

<sup>1</sup>National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine  
<sup>2,3,4,5,6</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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5

## ways to care for your smile when planning for a transplant



DENTAL BENEFITS

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About 80 Americans receive a new heart, lung, liver, pancreas, kidney or intestine each day.<sup>1</sup> There's no doubt about it: Organ donation saves lives!

Yet medicine taken to prevent the new organ from being rejected also weakens the immune system. That's why more than 80% of those receiving a transplant will develop at least one oral infection.<sup>2</sup> If you or a loved one are getting an organ transplant, here are five ways to keep your mouth and body healthy before, during and after this life-changing procedure.

1

### Let your dentist know if you are getting a transplant.

If you can, visit the dentist well before your procedure so there's enough time to take care of any cavities or other oral health issues before your immunity is compromised. It's important that your mouth is free of any infections or potential problems. After the transplant, avoid in-office dental treatment for at least three months to prevent complications from your transplant medicine, which is taken at the highest dosage at this time. Always reach out to your dentist if you are experiencing a dental emergency.

2

### Be sure your dentist and physician coordinate your care.

Your medical and dental history are closely intertwined. Talk to both your dentist and physician about what's happening with your mouth and body before, during and after a transplant. Keep them in the loop so they can work together on a plan that's best for your oral and overall health.

3

### Share medication information with your dentist.

Medications that help your body accept the transplanted organ also suppress your immune system, putting you in jeopardy of infection and other complications. Share your full list of medications so your dentist can be aware of drug interactions and work to manage side effects.

4

### Look for side effects and keep your dentist in the loop.

Anti-rejection medication makes it more likely for you to develop dry mouth, sores in your mouth, gum disease, mouth infections, enlarged gums or oral cancer. Contact your dentist and physician if you develop white or red patches in your mouth, a lump or bleeding when you brush your teeth.

5

### Check to see what your dental plan will cover.

Some dental plans offer enhanced benefits, such as additional cleanings, for those with specific health conditions. These conditions may include organ transplants, periodontal disease, diabetes, pregnancy, high-risk heart conditions, HIV and certain cancer therapies.

Getting a new organ will be transformational for your whole body. Medicine taken to prevent the new organ from being rejected will also weaken your immune system, so you'll want to take every precaution possible. By following these tips and getting your full medical and dental team on board, you can minimize the side effects and keep smiling through it all. ■

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Government Information on Organ Donation and Transplantation  
<sup>2</sup>National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine

DENTAL BENEFITS



*YOUR TEETH NEVER RETIRE. PROTECT THEM WITH*  
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