

# grin!

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

fall  
2012  
volume 1, issue 2

the goods on  
**mouthguards**

say cheese:

**how to  
take your  
best photograph**

**five flossy facts**  
everyone should know

high-tech  
**toothbrushes**

FEATURE ARTICLE

say cheese:  
how to take  
your best  
photograph

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cavity-free calendar



**Back to school!**  
If you're packing brown bag lunches, remember to include tooth-friendly snacks such as fresh fruit and whole-grain crackers.



**Healthy Aging Month.**  
Many medications come with the side effect of a dry mouth. To keep your mouth moist, drink lots of water, chew sugar-free gum and avoid tobacco and alcohol.



**Happy Halloween!**  
According to a 2011 poll, you're most likely to receive chocolate if you knock on a dentist's door at Halloween. It's one of the better trick-or-treat candy choices.



mouthing off

We want to hear from you! Send your response to this issue's question to [grin@deltadental.com](mailto:grin@deltadental.com) and put "Mouthing Off" in the subject line. Giving us your two cents could win you a Sonicare™ toothbrush! Here's this issue's question:

"What is your preferred flavor of dental floss?"

In our last issue, we asked readers if they kept up with their brushing and flossing routines while on vacation. Here's what they said:

"I'm more diligent on vacation because I eat different foods than I normally would and because I tend to go out a lot on vacation. Also, I don't have any time restraints, so I never run out of time to floss. It's great to be so relaxed that I can do all the things I should be doing."

- Ashly G.

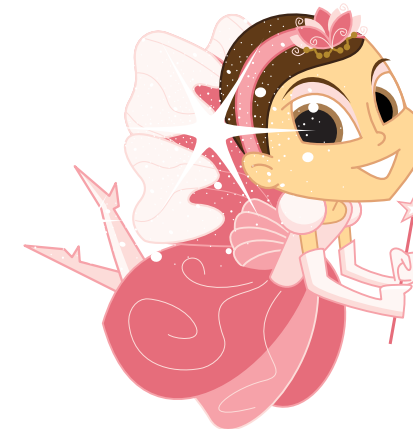
"I'm less diligent on vacation. Because a vacation changes your daily routine, it unfortunately can mean that flossing regularly goes by the wayside. I use more toothpicks though, does that count?"

- Melissa B.

"I carry floss with me in my purse or pocket when I don't have a purse. Flossing is very important - but when I am on vacation, there are nights when I'm so exhausted, I brush and drop to sleep! Luckily, I floss during the day at least once."

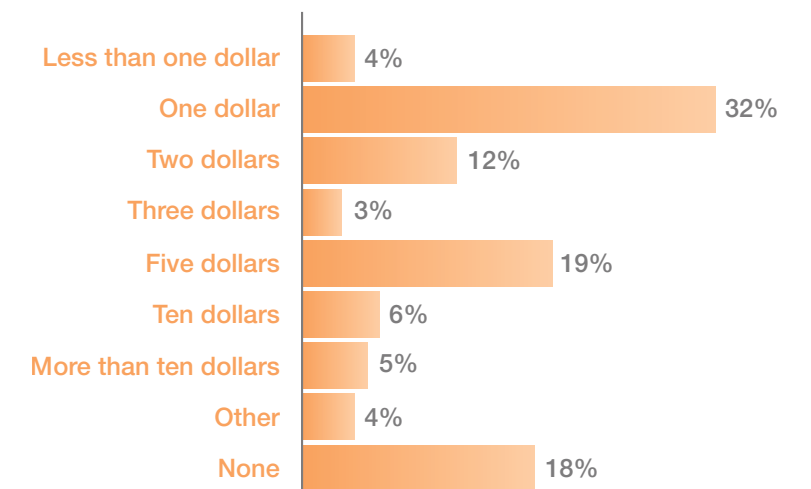
- Jeanie M.

by the numbers



Take our poll online! Visit [www.theoriginaltoothfairypoll.com](http://www.theoriginaltoothfairypoll.com)

Money Received from the Tooth Fairy (among children 5 years or older)



MEDIAN (among those who give money) = \$2.00  
Source: Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Survey, 2011

## readers ask, we answer

Mary from Brooklyn, New York, writes:

“My 3-year-old hasn’t grown out of her thumb sucking habit yet. We’re working on it, but in the meantime, is it going to cause any damage to her teeth?”



Hi, Mary. Don’t worry just yet. Thumb sucking doesn’t usually pose a threat to your child’s teeth until the permanent set erupts. It’s at that point that continued sucking may cause them to come in crooked, especially if she’s a vigorous thumb sucker. Most kids kick the habit between the ages of 2 and 4, but if you’re concerned, feel free to consult your daughter’s dentist or pediatrician.

You can encourage her to stop by offering rewards, like stickers or small prizes, when she goes an entire day without putting her thumb in her mouth. If it’s more of a nighttime habit, try putting socks or gloves on her hands to curb the behavior. Good luck!

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!



## mouth-friendly recipe

### Cheese in a Blanket

- 1 cheese stick
- 1 slice of ham or turkey
- 1 leaf of lettuce
- 1 tsp mustard

Wrap cheese stick in one slice of ham or turkey, followed by one leaf of washed lettuce. Dip “Cheese in a Blanket” in mustard and enjoy!

Cheese is an excellent source of calcium and other nutrients that are good for your teeth. Whether you need a quick and easy treat for after school or a light, flavorful lunch, this recipe is sure to satisfy even the pickiest mouths!

## the history of oral health: the truth about George Washington’s teeth

### 1730s – 1750s

Born on February 22, 1732, George Washington battled many childhood illnesses. The mercurous chloride treatment for these ailments wreaked havoc on teeth.

### 1754

George Washington lost his first permanent tooth at the age of 22.

### 1788

Pre inauguration, Washington commissioned dentures from renowned dentist John Greenwood, who later made him three more sets, including some ivory and one gold. None were wood.

### 1789

At the time of his presidential inauguration, Washington had just one of his original teeth remaining: his lower left bicuspid.

### 1790

Washington recorded his dental woes in a diary: “Still indisposed with an aching tooth, and swelled and inflamed gum.”

### Mid-1790s

While painting Washington’s famous portrait, artist Gilbert Stuart decided that ill-fitting dentures made Washington’s cheeks look sunken and stuffed the president’s cheeks with cotton.

### 1799

Washington died at the age of 67. Four days later, he was buried wearing a set of Greenwood’s dentures.





# say CHEESE!

## how to take your best photograph

The beginning of the school year brings many things: a return to textbooks, packed schedules and school pictures. Awkward poses and less-than-genuine smiles can be things of the past if you pass along these tips.



### show some polish.

Schedule an appointment with your child's dentist for a good cleaning and polishing a few days before the photo session. Not only will the TLC make teeth gleam, it also will make your child feel confident about flashing those pearly whites for the photographer, and confidence definitely shows in photos.

### lighten up.

The Academy of General Dentistry recommends that teens hold off whitening their teeth until they're at least 14. Older children, however, may benefit from a little lightening, especially if they've experienced any discoloration from the placement of braces. Chat with your dentist to see whether this is a good option for your child.

### don't fake it.

Genuine smiles always photograph better than phony ones, so know how to coax the real thing from your kid. Two tips from the pros: Think of a loved one or something funny. Both will help bring out happiness in the eyes, which is a sign of a "real" smile. If you're there during the photo shoot, try telling a joke or reminding your child of a funny family moment.

### get comfy.

It may sound odd, but get your child comfortable with producing a genuine smile on command. Figure out what kind of smile works best: open mouth, closed mouth, slight smile or ear-to-ear grin. Then have your child practice that smile without a mirror to understand what it feels like. After a couple of tries, it will be a piece of cake to re-create that grin in front of a photographer.

### relax.

The happier and more relaxed the subject is, the better the photos will be. Before the session starts, have your child take a few deep breaths and shake out any nervous jitters.

No school photos in your future? Luckily, these tips will work for any occasion where shutterbugs might be present.



# the goods on mouthguards

It's common knowledge that athletes playing rough-and-tumble sports should protect their teeth. What you may not know is that your children should wear mouthguards if they participate in *any* sport that carries the risk of face and mouth injuries. Here's what you need to know before you buy.

Young athletes are 60 times more likely to injure their teeth when they're not wearing mouthguards.

## Is a mouthguard really necessary?

Absolutely. Broken bones and pulled muscles will heal, but missing or damaged permanent teeth won't. They will require expensive repair or replacement. Not only do mouthguards help keep teeth from being injured or knocked out, they also help prevent inner mouth lacerations, and jaw and neck injuries.



Wearing a mouthguard can mean the difference between a lifetime of dental woes and a healthy smile.

**All mouthguards are not created equal.** Of all the mouthguards available, the hands-down winner is one that's custom-fit. The dentist will make a mold of your child's mouth, then create a guard to perfectly fit its contours. Though a custom mouthguard is the most expensive option, the exact fit means it protects teeth better. It's also the most comfortable option, so your little athlete is more likely to wear it.

"Boil-and-bite" mouthguards are less pricey and can be purchased at most sporting goods stores. This type gets soft when dropped into hot water. After it softens, the wearer bites into the mouthguard to ensure a fit that forms to the shape of the mouth.

Another over-the-counter choice is a stock mouthguard, which isn't customizable and must be held in place by clenching teeth together. While inexpensive, this type typically is the hardest to wear comfortably for long periods.

**Keep it clean!** Mouthguards are most effective when you keep them clean and maintained. A few tips:

1. Brush teeth before use to keep food particles and bacteria in the mouth to a minimum.
2. Occasionally clean the mouthguard using soap and cold water.
3. When not in use, store the mouthguard in a well-vented container.
4. Don't chew or cut chunks from the mouthguard.
5. After every use, give the mouthguard a quick once-over for wear and tear. Replace it or take it to the dentist for repairs, if needed.
6. To help the mouthguard retain its shape, keep it out of hot cars and direct sunlight.

Each year, three to five million kids in the U.S. suffer from sports injuries severe enough to require emergency room treatment.



Wearing a mouthguard can mean the difference between a lifetime of dental woes and a healthy smile. For such a small appliance – and such a small investment – that's a pretty big payback.

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, high school athletes are required to wear mouthguards in football, field hockey, ice hockey, lacrosse and wrestling (for wrestlers wearing braces). Athletes in these sports – just to name a few – also should consider using mouthguards:

- acrobatics
- baseball
- basketball
- bicycling
- boxing
- discus throwing
- gymnastics
- martial arts
- racquetball
- rugby
- shot put
- skateboarding
- skiing
- soccer
- surfing
- volleyball
- water polo

# five flossy facts everyone should know



Even the most experienced flosser may have room for improvement. Here are five of the finer details.

- 1 Floss at least once a day for two to three minutes.**
- 2 If you floss *before* you brush:** The fluoride from your toothpaste will be able to get between your teeth better.
- 3 A common oversight:** The back side of the back teeth on each side of the mouth. They need to be flossed, too!



- 4 Eighteen inches of floss is just about right.** For reference, that's a little more than a sheet and a half of paper measured lengthwise.
- 5 Follow the proper technique:**
  - Pull floss taut and use a gentle sawing motion to get it between two teeth.
  - Curve the floss into a "C" shape against one tooth, then slide the floss gently into the space between the tooth and gum.
  - Scrape up and down along the tooth five or six times.
  - Curve the floss the other way and do the same thing to the adjacent tooth.
  - Repeat, repeat, repeat!

# high-tech toothbrushes



Thankfully, dental technology has come a long way since the twigs or animal hair people once used for toothbrushes. Check out the latest in dental trends.

## Toothbrush Timers

People typically spend just 46 seconds brushing their teeth. A thorough, effective brushing should take two to three minutes. Since most people don't keep a stopwatch on the bathroom counter, a toothbrush timer can help improve your time. Some models of power toothbrushes have timers built into the handles that will alert you when two minutes have passed. Other models beep or vibrate every 30 seconds, alerting you that it's time to move to a new quadrant of your mouth.

## Pressure Indicators

It is possible to apply too much pressure when you're brushing. This can be both painful and harmful to teeth and sensitive tissue. If you're guilty of this habit, look for toothbrushes with pressure indicators that warn you when you're pressing too hard. Some light up to flash an alert, while others stop vibrating when you need to lighten up.

## Brushing Modes

Some electric toothbrushes let you choose your brushing level: standard cleaning, soft (for sensitive teeth), massage (for gums) or polish. You can switch between modes based on your personal oral health care issues and preferences.



# brushing up

Ever wonder what your dentist is *really* thinking? *Grin!* wanted to find out too, so we talked to **Dr. Nihill** from Dental Health of Wheaton in Illinois.



## What advice do you give your patients?

It's much easier and less expensive to prevent dental problems than to treat them. Do your daily brushing and flossing along with professional preventive check-ups and cleanings. That's the best way to avoid major problems later. Additionally, more kids should be wearing mouthguards in sports such as basketball, soccer and baseball. We see more dental injuries in these activities compared with sports with mouthguard requirements, like football.

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

If you have any dental needs, stop procrastinating! It's almost always easier and less expensive to treat problems early.

## Have you ever had any cavities?

You bet. I grew up in the pre-fluoride era and have a mouthful of restorations to show for it.

## Do you brush and floss as much as you recommend?

Probably more: I brush upon waking, after breakfast, after lunch, and before bedtime, as well as flossing two to three times daily. Remember, dentists spend most of the day in close contact with their patients. A dentist with "dragon" breath is a lonely dentist.

*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 – dental insurance lingo, decoded

*Does your dental insurance Explanation of Benefits sometimes seem as if it's written in a foreign language? Let us help you decipher some of those terms.*

**Deductible:** Similar to a car insurance deductible, a dental insurance deductible is the total dollar amount you're responsible for paying before Delta Dental begins paying benefits. Under Delta Dental benefit plans, diagnostic and preventive services, such as exams, x-rays, cleanings and fluoride treatments, are often exempt from deductibles.

**Annual Maximum:** The maximum total Delta Dental will pay in benefits within a calendar year.

**In-Network:** Participating dentists who have agreed to provide treatment within certain guidelines, including fee limits for certain procedures. Usually, you realize the greatest savings by visiting an in-network dentist.