

grin!

**behind the mask:
what dentists
want you to know**

**food foes in
your fridge
and pantry**

5 reasons
to quit
smoking

**naughty
and nice**
dental behaviors

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cavity-free calendar



November

It's National Diabetes Awareness Month!

Your mouth can contain telltale signs of chronic diseases, including diabetes, so a regular dental checkup could help with early detection. Make an appointment with your dentist if you're overdue.



December

Celebrate National Eggnog Day on the 24th – or just enjoy a cup any time this month. Try making your own version with low-fat milk and reduced sugar. Or drink it with a meal to help keep sugars from clinging to teeth.

two-word answers

Q: What's the best mouth-friendly option during holiday parties?

A: Veggie trays!



keeping you covered: kids and crowns



Most of the time, when kids talk about crowns, they're referring to bedtime fairy tales. Unfortunately, tooth decay can be severe enough in young children that a typical filling may not do the trick, and a crown may be needed instead.

A crown is a restoration that entirely covers a weak or decaying tooth to provide support. When a child needs a crown it is usually for a baby tooth. Unlike the custom-fit gold or porcelain-based crowns used for adult teeth, children's crowns are usually pre-formed and made of stainless steel. They can be placed quickly and are relatively inexpensive compared to adult crowns. When the baby tooth falls out on its own, the crown comes with it.

It may seem unnecessary to restore a baby tooth since it falls out anyway. However, baby teeth help children chew food, play a role in speech development and save space for permanent teeth while guiding them into position.

The best way to prevent your child from needing restorations is to encourage a regular oral health routine. Brushing twice a day for two minutes each time, flossing once a day and eating a diet of healthy foods help keep your child's smile sparkling.

Your child's dentist may suggest a crown:

- If decay is advanced enough that the tooth isn't able to support a filling.
- If your child has a root canal, which will leave the tooth more susceptible to fracture.
- If there is a tooth defect or fracture from an accident.
- If your child is unable to maintain good oral health habits or is at higher risk for new cavities.
- If cost is a concern. Stainless steel crowns last longer than fillings and are more cost-effective.

readers ask, we answer

Stephanie writes:

“My 15-year-old daughter has a hard time remembering to wear her retainer. Can she get away with not wearing it from time to time?”

Hi, Stephanie. It can be hard for teenagers to remember to do anything – from putting their dishes in the sink to making the bed or taking out the garbage. But it's important for your daughter to wear her retainer as her orthodontist instructed to stabilize her gums and supporting bone, and prevent her teeth from shifting back.

The key to success with a removable retainer is to develop a regular routine. Like any habit, it may take time to take hold. It may be easier for your daughter to remember to insert her retainer if she does it during another daily activity around the same time – after brushing in the morning or evening, when putting on her glasses or contacts or before applying lip gloss on her way out the door for school.

Finally, remind your daughter that braces and retainers aren't worn only to achieve a beautiful smile, but also because straight teeth are easier to keep healthy for a lifetime. It can be hard to brush and floss properly with crooked or crowded teeth, and repeatedly missing hard-to-clean areas can lead to cavities and even gum disease. **The bottom line: If your daughter misses an occasional day, it won't undo the years of braces and teeth movement. But it's best to stay in the habit of wearing her retainer.**

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!



the history of oral health: the tangled history of dental floss



1815

A dentist in New Orleans advises patients to use a thin silk thread to clean between teeth.

1882

The first commercial dental floss is made available on store shelves.



1940s

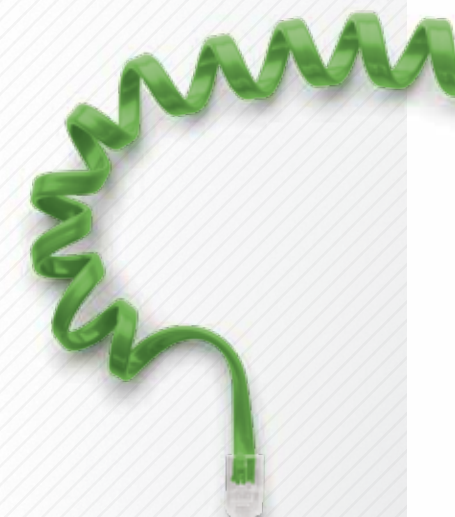
Due to rising costs during World War II, nylon replaces silk as the dental floss material of choice.

1963

James B. Kirby, also known for inventing the Kirby vacuum, creates the floss pick.

1994

An inmate escapes from jail by weaving dental floss into a rope as thick as a telephone cord.





mouth-friendly recipe: **garlic sweet potato mash**

Sweet potatoes are a staple at many holiday meals, but they are often covered in brown sugar and gooey marshmallows. Try this savory alternative.

Ingredients:

4 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed	½ cup 1 percent milk
1 tablespoon butter	2 tablespoons light sour cream
3 garlic cloves, crushed	Salt and pepper

Directions:

Place sweet potatoes in a slow cooker and cover them with water. Salt the water, then place the lid on the slow cooker and cook on low for four hours.

Just before the potatoes are done, melt the butter in a pan and sauté the garlic until golden. Use a colander to drain the potatoes and put them back into the slow cooker. Add the garlic butter, milk and sour cream, then mash until creamy. Season with salt and pepper to desired taste. You can keep the sweet potato mash warm in the slow cooker for up to two hours.

on topic with dr. kohn

The Link Between Diabetes and Gum Disease

Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Service 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 valuable insights to share as our resident dental expert.



The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 29 million Americans have diabetes. Unfortunately, people with diabetes have an increased risk of developing gum disease, often at a younger age than those without diabetes. People with poor blood sugar control are more likely to get more severe gum disease and lose teeth more frequently than people with good control. Conversely, those with severe gum disease have a more difficult time controlling their blood sugar.

If you are diagnosed with diabetes, discuss it with your dentist. Also keep in mind that if you develop gum disease, your dentist may refer you to your physician to test for early diabetes. If you have diabetes, good blood sugar control is critical to avoiding periodontal disease.



BEHIND THE MASK: WHAT DENTISTS WANT YOU TO KNOW

Your dentist knows more about you than you may realize. During your appointment, he or she can tell what you had for lunch, if you really floss regularly and even if you could be at risk for chronic diseases. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

To turn the tables, we asked dentists what they'd like you to know. Their answers may surprise you!

We don't expect you to answer our questions while we're working in your mouth.

Our somewhat one-sided conversations and questions relieve awkward silence, help pass the time and distract you from our gloved fingers and instruments in your mouth. Also, our chatter can help us learn more about each other, making our dental visits more friendly.



We can tell when you don't floss.

Even if you meticulously floss your teeth before your checkup, we can tell if flossing isn't a regular habit by the gum inflammation that develops in your mouth over time. Just floss once a day, including below the gumline, and your teeth and gums can be much healthier – and you won't need to fib about your flossing habits.

We really appreciate it when you brush before your appointment.

We're grateful when our patients show up with no plaque or food debris on their teeth. A clean field is always easier to work with. That being said, we understand that sometimes you have to squeeze a dental appointment into the middle of a workday or between running errands. Not everyone has time to brush beforehand.

We think drinking soda is bad. Really bad.

Regular soda is full of sugar and typically quite acidic. This is a double whammy for your teeth. The sugar feeds acid-producing bacteria that cause tooth decay, and the acidity can cause tooth erosion if you sip on a soft drink frequently throughout the day. The best advice is to avoid it entirely. If you're going to drink it, limit yourself to one small 12- to 16-ounce drink daily and finish it at one sitting instead of sipping it over the course of the day.



Bad breath doesn't bother us – unless it's also bad news for your health.

Bad breath, also called halitosis, is very common. Although it's a source of embarrassment for many patients, we're used to encountering morning coffee breath and post-lunch garlic breath.

Bad breath is really only a concern for us when it is a chronic issue, which can indicate that something bigger could be wrong, from an abscessed tooth to gum disease. Chronic bad breath can also be caused by a problem outside your mouth such as a sinus infection, tonsillitis or even more serious problems like diabetes, reflux disease, kidney or liver failure or other systemic problems.

Don't be afraid to discuss the causes and solutions for bad breath with your dentist. When you have occasional dragon breath, brushing and flossing, swishing with water or popping a breath mint should do the trick.

Some of us eat candy. Probably more than we should.

Just like everyone else, some dentists have a sweet tooth. However, most of us make up for these poor dietary choices by practicing the oral hygiene regimen we recommend for patients – brushing carefully twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing thoroughly and regularly and keeping snacking to a minimum. Remember that starchy snack foods like potato chips and crackers contain simple carbohydrates that can also cause tooth decay if left too long on your teeth.

It's OK if you forget to floss once in a while.

It's good to form routine habits, and flossing once a day helps us build a simple routine. It's also important to remember *why* you brush and floss. These two simple practices remove the sticky film (plaque) that constantly forms on teeth. The longer plaque lingers, the more it releases destructive acids, as well as other enzymes and chemicals that can harm teeth and gums.

Plaque doesn't cause tooth decay or gum disease overnight, so if you miss a day you are not going to suddenly have a decayed tooth or develop gum disease. However, many people tend to repeatedly miss the same spots, such as between teeth and under the gumline, where your toothbrush can't reach. If you keep missing the same area each day, the plaque in that area can have weeks – or even months – of impact before it is removed. So try to establish a good routine of daily brushing and flossing, but don't fret too much if you miss a day. (Do make an effort to floss after eating sweets, though!)



5 REASONS TO QUIT SMOKING

The American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout takes place every November, challenging people to stop using tobacco and giving them the tools to do so. Here are five good reasons to quit you may not be familiar with:

- 1 Even a longtime smoker's heart rate and blood pressure begin to return to normal shortly after quitting.** Within 12 hours, the carbon monoxide level in the blood begins to decline. Within one year, the added risk for coronary heart disease is cut in half, and within 15 years, the risk is the same as that of a nonsmoker. In addition, people who quit smoking have an improved sense of smell, and food tastes better.
- 2 The addictive and toxic compounds in a single cigar can be as much as an entire pack of cigarettes.** Studies show that smoking cigars raises the risk for cancer of the lungs, mouth, esophagus and larynx, as well as the risk for heart attack.
- 3 Tobacco stains teeth, of course – but it's also bad for gums and can lead to gum disease, infection, bad breath and more.** Dentists stress that there is no safe form of tobacco. Even filtered cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco and e-cigarettes are harmful to your oral health.
- 4 Because smoking increases a person's chance of getting gum disease, smokers are also more likely to experience tooth loss than nonsmokers.**
- 5 Smokers are less likely to have success with dental implants.** Specifically, people who smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day are 10 percent more likely to have dental implants fail, and people who smoke 20 cigarettes or more on a daily basis have a 30 percent failure rate.



NAUGHTY

+ *Nice* DENTAL BEHAVIORS



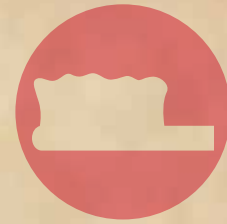
Improper flossing techniques, tooth grinding and sharing utensils will land you on the dental Naughty List. But it's not too late to make the Nice List. Simply follow these tips and tricks to get back into your dentist's good graces in time for the holidays.



NAUGHTY

Using a hard-bristled toothbrush.

Not only can brushing with bristles that are too hard be painful, it can also wear away the gums and erode tooth enamel at the gumline.



Nice

Brushing with a soft-bristled toothbrush.

The pliable bristles are easier on your gums and can reach in between teeth and under the gums without causing damage or pain. Soft bristles are available for manual and electric toothbrushes. Remember to replace your toothbrush or toothbrush head every three months, or sooner if the bristles become frayed or bent.

Bonus tip: Toothbrushes make great, inexpensive stocking stuffers!



NAUGHTY

Not wearing a mouthguard while playing sports. Without the protection offered by a mouthguard, you and your sporty friends are more likely to suffer from oral lacerations, bruises and chipped or lost teeth.



Nice

Wear a mouthguard, even for non-contact sports that have a high possibility for mouth injury, such as ice skating or snowboarding. And they're not just for kids. Whether playing on the company softball league or a round of racquetball at the gym, wearing a mouthguard will earn you a spot on the Nice List and save your smile.



NAUGHTY

Not flossing daily, or flossing incorrectly.

Even if you floss every day as recommended, it won't do much good if your technique is off.

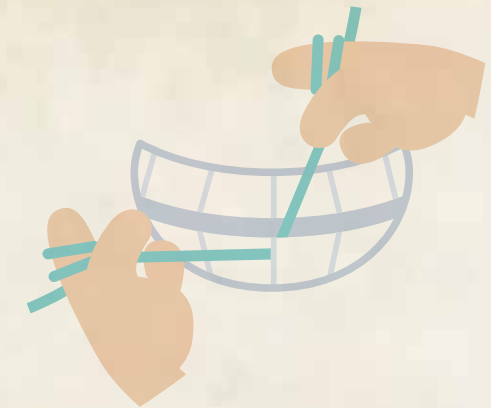


Nice

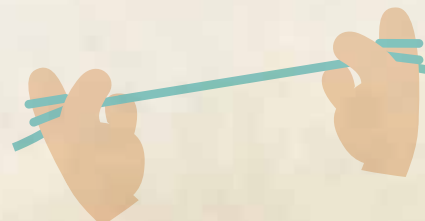
Flossing daily and taking the time to do it right. Follow the easy steps below to make sure you get the most out of your daily flossing routine.



1 Use about 18 inches of floss. Wrap most of it around your index or middle finger and the rest around your other index or middle finger. As you floss, switch the used part to the opposite finger.



4 When you get to the gum, curve the floss into a "C" shape against one tooth. Slide it gently into the space between the gum and the tooth.



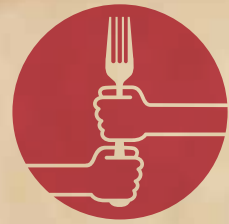
2 Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and first fingers.

Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub it up and down against the side of the tooth.

3 Gently guide the floss between your teeth. Rub it between your teeth. Don't snap it – that can hurt your gums!

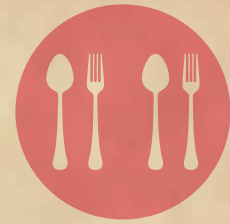
Repeat for each tooth – and don't forget to give the back side of your back teeth some flossing love, too!

Bonus tip: Consider gifting floss! While it may seem like an unusual gift, many flavors – like cinnamon and peppermint – fit right in with other winter-themed products.



NAUGHTY

Sharing utensils, particularly with infants and toddlers. Everyday activities, such as sharing utensils, tasting each other's food or washing a pacifier off in your mouth, may seem harmless. But they can actually pass bad bacteria from one mouth to another – including bacteria that cause cavities.



Nice

Making sure everyone has his or her own. Avoid passing cavity-causing bacteria by preventing the sharing of toothbrushes, utensils, straws or food. If you have a little one, don't clean his or her pacifier with your own saliva and discourage your child from placing fingers in anyone's mouth. Children usually put their fingers back into their own mouths afterward, increasing the chance of transmitting bacteria.



NAUGHTY

Grinding teeth, also known as bruxism. Over time, this painful habit can wear down teeth and may even cause fractures, not to mention disrupt loved ones' sleep!



Nice

If you know you're a nighttime grinder, talk with your dentist. He or she can recommend treatment, including a mouthguard that prevents tooth damage. Unsure if you're grinding your teeth in your sleep? Common symptoms include headaches, unexplained facial pain, earaches or a sore jaw or neck.

By following these "nice" dental behaviors this holiday season (and all year), you'll be rewarded with the best presents of all – a healthy smile and a pain-free mouth!

FOOD FOES

in Your Fridge and Pantry

It may not be one of the better-known holidays, but National Clean Your Fridge Day on November 15 is a great excuse to make sure the contents of your fridge and pantry are mouth-friendly. Here's what to keep and what needs to go.



FRIEND: *Milk*



FOE: *Soda*

Your mom was right: Drink your milk. The calcium is good for your teeth and jawbone. People who get the right amount of calcium are also less likely to develop gum disease. And you already know that soda is no good – in addition to having zero nutritional value, the acid weakens your enamel.



FRIEND: *Water*



FOE: *Juice*

Water is the superior beverage – whether you prefer sparkling, still or tap. Juices are loaded with sugar and empty calories. Water is sugar-free and keeps your mouth moist, which helps your saliva rinse away food particles and bacteria from teeth. And if you live in an area that fluoridates tap water, getting a drink from the faucet also helps strengthen tooth enamel.



FRIEND: *Yogurt*



FOE: *Ice cream*

Craving something sweet? Instead of filling your freezer with ice cream, make your own homemade frozen yogurt. It's as easy as combining frozen strawberries, yogurt and sugar-free sweetener in a blender!

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. George Felt of Meredith Dental in New Hampshire.

What's the best dental advice you've ever received? You don't have to floss all of your teeth – only the ones you want to keep.

Do you brush and floss as much as you recommend? Only after every meal. Seriously – I just love to brush my teeth – call me crazy.

Do you have a favorite floss flavor? I bought some bacon-flavored floss at my favorite joke store along with a tube of bacon toothpaste. I'm saving it for a special occasion, or perhaps a special gift.

In your opinion, which celebrity has the best smile? Tom Cruise is a contender for top smile because people love to talk about his teeth.

Do you prefer an electric toothbrush or a manual toothbrush? I recommend electric toothbrushes, especially to anyone who has trouble gripping the handle of a standard toothbrush. In the long run, it's not the type of brush, but how often and how well you brush.

If you could tell patients to stop doing one thing, what would it be? Stop delaying appropriate treatment and get preventive care on a regular basis. Timely treatment and preventive dentistry save you time and money – and help you keep your teeth.

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.