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

winter  
2017

volume 6, issue 4

6 WAYS TO INCORPORATE  
ORAL HEALTH INTO YOUR

*Holiday Traditions*

everything you ever  
wanted to know about  
dental implants

5 oral health  
resolutions

dental trend  
spotlight:  
xylitol products





A smile can say  
**IT'S TOO GOOD  
TO PUT DOWN**

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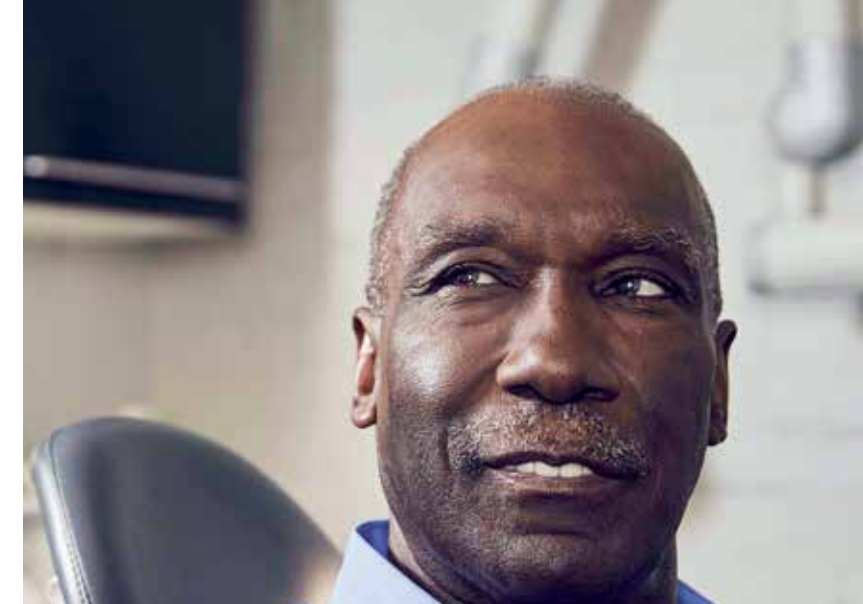


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## on topic with dr. kohn

### seasonal depression and your oral health

Many people suffer from the “winter blues” or get depressed or anxious in the colder, darker months. You may have a bad day or two, but if it drags on, you may suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Scientists think these feelings may be triggered by our bodies’ responses to less sunlight. People with conditions such as depression or anxiety are subject to a greater number of risk factors for oral disease than those who don’t have them, but there are steps you can take to lessen the effects of SAD and maintain good oral health during the cold, dark winter months:

- **Stay active.** Regular exercise has been proven to be effective against depression.
- **Experience as much daylight as you can.** Exposure to natural light will help boost your mood.
- **Eat plenty of fruits and veggies.** Winter blues can make you crave sugar and carbohydrates such as chocolate, breads and starchy comfort foods that are bad for your dental health.
- **Be conscientious about your oral health by brushing with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day and flossing once daily.** You’re more likely to neglect brushing and flossing when you’re feeling depressed.

**It’s normal to have some down days, but if these feelings continue for days at a time and you can’t seem to find your usual level of energy or enjoyment in life, talk with your physician.**

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.



## chicken and wild rice soup

*They say chicken soup is good for the soul, but this hearty recipe is also good for your teeth thanks to the calcium provided by the milk and cheese.*

### ingredients:

- 1 cup uncooked wild rice
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 large carrot, peeled and chopped
- 2 minced garlic cloves
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 ½ cups potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 3 cups milk
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 10 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups cooked chicken, shredded
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

### directions:

- 1 Cook rice according to package directions.
- 2 Coat the bottom of a Dutch oven or large pot with olive oil, then sauté onion, carrot and garlic for 3 minutes over medium heat.
- 3 Add broth and potatoes and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
- 4 Combine milk and flour in a bowl and whisk until well combined. Add the milk mixture to the soup and cook for 5 minutes or until slightly thick, stirring constantly.
- 5 Remove from heat and add cheese, stirring until it melts.
- 6 Then add rice, chicken, salt and pepper; mix well. Enjoy!

# HISTORY OF ORAL HEALTH: the evolution of braces

Humans have long realized that proper alignment of teeth is an important part of oral health, but techniques for straightening teeth have changed dramatically.

**Egyptian mummies** have been found with gold bands around their teeth. Researchers think the bands were secured with cord made from animal intestines to act as orthodontic devices.



Roman physician **Aulus Cornelius Celsus** recommended that parents use their fingers to apply pressure to their children's teeth every day to ensure proper positioning.

**King George III's personal dentist** wrote about the social and medical benefits of symmetrical teeth.



By the early 20th century, **Edward Angle**, known as "the father of orthodontics," had patented 37 "tooth regulation" devices, including brackets, tubes, expanders and ligatures.

Today, more than **4 million children and adults in the U.S. have braces**, according to the American Association of Orthodontists.



## readers ask, we answer

Lexi asks:

**"My teeth ache when it's really cold out. Why does this happen?"**

Hi, Lexi. Experiencing tooth sensitivity because of low temperatures is not unlike getting a little jolt in your mouth from a cold beverage or food. Sensations like these are often due to exposed dentin, the core tissue inside of teeth. Dentin is usually covered by tooth enamel, but over time, the enamel can wear thin, erode away completely or even decay. Other causes for sensitivity may include:

**Grinding or clenching teeth**

**Periodontal (gum) disease**

**Inflamed pulp**  
(the blood vessels and nerves in a tooth)

**Teeth whitening treatments**

Tell your dentist about your toothaches so they can help determine the cause. Your dentist may blow air across your teeth to test the severity of your sensitivity and pinpoint its exact location.

Depending on the cause, the solution could be as simple as switching to a desensitizing toothpaste or mouth rinse. If your teeth are hypersensitive and ache on a daily basis, your dentist may recommend a plastic coating or a filling. Should inflamed tooth pulp be the culprit, it's usually remedied with a root canal.

We recommend you make a dental appointment to find out what's causing your sensitivity. But in the meantime, avoid acidic foods, stop whitening treatments and don't aggressively brush your teeth and gums.

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.

—5—

## ORAL HEALTH RESOLUTIONS

Many people make resolutions every New Year – but only 8 percent actually keep them. Be part of that elite group with these easy-to-keep resolutions that will help your smile sparkle all year long.



### 1 FLOSS DAILY

Only 4 in 10 Americans floss daily and 20 percent never floss.<sup>1</sup> Flossing at least once a day is an essential part of oral health – it helps keep plaque at bay and can reduce your risk of gum disease and gingivitis.



### 2 BRUSH TWICE DAILY

More than 30 percent of Americans skip nighttime brushing.<sup>2</sup> Brushing before bed helps remove a whole day's worth of food particles, bacteria and plaque. Skipping this step allows plaque to rest against teeth all night, which, over time, can be harmful to your gums and tooth enamel. Be sure to use fluoride toothpaste for decay prevention!



### 3 COMMIT TO TWO MINUTES

Your brushing sessions should last for two minutes to ensure you're reaching all the nooks and crannies in your mouth – but it can be surprisingly hard to guess how long 120 seconds is if you're not looking at a clock. You can keep this resolution by using the toothbrush timer on Delta Dental's free mobile app or using a toothbrush with a built-in timer.



### 4 MAKE A DENTAL APPOINTMENT

Seeing a dentist regularly means that any oral health issues you may have can be identified early, saving you time and money in the long run. Plus, people who visit the dentist on a regular basis tend to have better oral health and better overall well-being, so it's well worth your time.



### 5 DRINK MORE WATER

Drinking water is just as beneficial for your mouth as it is for the rest of your body. Staying hydrated can prevent dry mouth and helps rinse food particles and bacteria away from teeth. Carrying a refillable water bottle is a convenient and eco-friendly way to stay well-watered – and if you fill it with tap water, you'll also benefit from a fluoride boost if your community fluoridates the water supply.

<sup>1,2</sup>2014 Delta Dental Oral Health and Well-Being Survey

"A smile  
IS THE SAME AS  
sunshine;  
IT BANISHES WINTER FROM THE  
HUMAN COUNTENANCE."  
- VICTOR HUGO, LES MISÉRABLES

## TWO-WORD answers

**Q:** Are smiles all the same?

**A:** They vary.

There are 19 types of smiles, including flirtatious, miserable, nervous and contemptuous, according to research from the University of California, San Francisco.





## everything you ever wanted to know about DENTAL IMPLANTS

*Today, dental implants are increasingly being used as an effective alternative to dentures and bridges to replace natural teeth.*

### THE ADVANTAGES

Implants can be used to replace one tooth or many teeth, or even to support a full denture. Implants are anchored into the jawbone, similar to the natural tooth root it's replacing. Dentists can place the implant into the socket of the tooth they are extracting or surgically create a space for an implant if a tooth has been missing for some time. A crown is placed on top of the implant and looks and functions like a natural tooth without the worry of decay or the need for root canals. Since the implant functions like a tooth root and a crown or bridge can be fastened directly to it, implants look and feel more natural than a removable denture. This may improve a person's ability to chew, speak and their self-confidence. Implants are highly successful and, although more expensive than a conventional bridge, they may prove to be more economical and long-lasting over a lifetime.

### HOW THEY WORK

It takes several sessions over the course of several months to properly install dental implants. The process may involve a number of dental professionals, such as an oral surgeon, periodontist, prosthodontist or general dentist with specific training in implants.

- 1 Your dentist will extract the unhealthy tooth.
- 2 After your gums heal and the bony socket fills in for 3-6 months, the dentist will do a second minor surgery. Your dentist will install the artificial root, made from titanium and other body-safe materials into the jawbone where the tooth previously was. If the missing tooth is in an area that shows when you speak or smile, your dentist will likely make a temporary tooth or appliance to wear while you heal.
- 3 Then, a tiny metal post known as an abutment or a connector, is attached to the artificial root. This piece sticks up above the gums and is what the tooth crown is attached to.
- 4 In the last step, a crown or a replacement tooth is attached to the connector post.



This series of surgeries can take up to six months, but if you meet certain criteria, the dentist can expedite the process by performing multiple steps in one session. If you've had a previous extraction, the process will be similar.



### ARE IMPLANTS FOR YOU?

As long as you're in good health, have healthy gums and enough bone structure to support the implant, you're probably a good candidate for dental implants. Your dentist will do an assessment to determine if implants are a good fit for you.

Dental benefits for implants vary by plan, so before you seek treatment, be sure to check your plan by logging in at [deltadental.com](https://deltadental.com), referring to your plan booklet or contacting Delta Dental.

# 6

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE ORAL HEALTH INTO YOUR

# Holiday Traditions

*The holidays are finally here! With all the figgy pudding and honey-glazed chestnuts, it can be hard to keep your smile twinkling like the tinsel on the tree. These tips will help you keep your smile merry and bright all season long.*



1

While it's fun to stuff stockings with candy, the treats hung with care don't have to be unhealthy. Toothbrushes with features like flashing lights or sound effects can be an exciting way to make brushing fun. You can also pick up some floss with unique flavors like strawberry, cupcake or bacon.



2

Sugar cookies and fudge aren't the only snacks to share around the block during the holidays. Consider bringing your neighbors fresh and festive alternatives like pomegranates and persimmons or homemade, sugar-free treats.



3

There's nothing like a little hot cocoa to make your spirits bright. This year, opt for something that'll keep your smile shining, too. Try whipping up a batch of sugar-free cocoa for you and your kin, or pour some into a thermos as a sippable sweet treat to enjoy while looking at holiday lights and decorations.



4

Turning on a two-minute song is a fun way to make sure you hit the mark when it comes to brushing your teeth for the recommended amount of time. During the holidays, switch it up with something a little more festive - "Jingle Bells" and other short holiday tunes can be great for helping you and your little ones brush for the right amount of time.



5

The season of giving is a perfect time to donate toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss to local charities in need. Homeless and women's shelters are always looking for dental supplies. The following organizations are also great resources for providing toothbrushes to those in need:

- [donateatoothbrush.com](http://donateatoothbrush.com)
- [globaldentalrelief.org/donate-supplies](http://globaldentalrelief.org/donate-supplies)
- [ncohf.org/smile-drive](http://ncohf.org/smile-drive)



6

Advent calendars are a fun way to count down to Christmas, but 25 days of sweets can take a toll on your teeth. Replace candies with toys or trinkets such as erasers, crayons, plastic jewelry, stickers and temporary tattoos. If you're pressed for time, pick up a countdown calendar that comes with prepackaged toys.



## the connection between oral and mental health

*If you're feeling blue, your teeth might be, too. Recent research suggests that people with anxiety or depression may experience a decline in oral health. Understand the connection and learn what to do if it's happening to you.*

The link between oral and mental health is hard to ignore. Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey showed that almost two-thirds of people with depression reported having a toothache in the last year. It also indicated that half of all people with depression rated their teeth condition as fair or poor. A scientific review of related studies found a strong link between periodontal (gum) disease and mood conditions like stress, distress, anxiety, depression and loneliness.

The most obvious explanation for the link comes from the behavioral effects of stress, depression and anxiety. People with these conditions sometimes lose focus on oral health habits, which can lead to significant dental issues. Depression, for example, can cause people to brush and floss at irregular intervals, skip dentist visits, have unhealthy diets and self-medicate with smoking.

Biologically, depression and anxiety cause several factors that impact oral health. The stress they create manifests itself in the body as a hormone called cortisol. As cortisol levels increase, the immune system gets weaker. This can leave you vulnerable to mouth conditions like gum inflammation (gingivitis) and gum disease (periodontitis). In addition, medications prescribed for depression and anxiety can cause dry mouth. This lack of saliva can mean that food debris, plaque and bacteria aren't getting rinsed from teeth easily, which can make it easier for cavities to form.

Anxiety, in particular, tends to be associated with several oral health issues. If you have anxiety, you're more susceptible to canker sores, dry mouth and teeth grinding (bruxism). As with depression, these issues may be attributed to a lack of oral care or as side effects of anxiety medication.

Luckily, when depression or anxiety takes a toll on oral health, there are ways to fight back. The simplest step you can take to maintain your oral health is to brush twice a day and floss daily. Keeping up these basic oral health habits can go a long way to keeping your mouth in tip-top shape.



Your dentist can help you deal with the oral health effects of depression and anxiety. Take a moment during your next dentist visit to explain your symptoms and discuss any medications you're taking to manage them.

By knowing the potential issues and taking steps to prevent them, people with depression or anxiety can ensure that their smiles stay healthy through all the ups and downs.



## DENTAL TREND SPOTLIGHT

### xylitol products

*You may have noticed an ingredient called "xylitol" appearing in products from gum to peanut butter. Proponents tout its benefits, but before popping a piece of xylitol gum in your mouth, it's good to pop a couple of questions.*

#### WHAT IS IT?

Xylitol is a naturally occurring sugar that can be found in fruits, vegetables and grains like raspberries, mushrooms, corn and oats. It's typically extracted from fibers in birch trees or corn husks and cobs.

When xylitol is extracted from plants, it can be used as an artificial sweetener with some pretty sweet benefits. First, it contains about one-third of the caloric content of regular table sugar. More importantly, it doesn't cause tooth decay like sugar. In fact, it can actually help prevent cavities.

#### IS IT EFFECTIVE?

Xylitol has been proven to effectively prevent cavities when added to chewing gum, toothpaste and other oral care products. But there's a caveat: It takes about 20 grams of xylitol a day to truly work, which is quite a lot - it's the equivalent of about 20 sticks of gum. The small, naturally occurring amount found in food is likely not enough to have an effect on teeth.

#### IS IT SAFE TO USE?

Doctors assert that it's safe to consume up to 50 grams of xylitol a day. When consumed in excess, however, xylitol can cause diarrhea and intestinal gas. Because long-term side effects haven't been extensively studied, you should avoid xylitol if you're pregnant or breastfeeding.

However, xylitol is not safe for dogs in any quantity - the substance has proven deadly when ingested by our canine friends, even in small amounts. If your dog does munch a morsel with xylitol, call your vet immediately.

**THE VERDICT:** In safe doses, foods containing xylitol are a great way to cut back on the amount of sugar in your diet and may even help prevent cavities. But it's definitely not a replacement for your usual oral health routine, so make sure you keep regular brushing and flossing on the menu.

#### AVERAGE AMOUNT OF XYLITOL FOUND IN 1 SERVING OF . . .





## your winter *smile* list

*These 10 wintry to-do's are sure to make you grin!*

- 1 Try your hand at making a healthy homemade soup. (Check out our recipe on page 5.)
- 2 Take a tour of your town's best holiday lights.
- 3 Do a random act of kindness.
- 4 Declare a pajama day – stay in and stay cozy!
- 5 Organize a movie marathon. (Perhaps on pajama day?)
- 6 Read a book that's been on your list for a while.
- 7 Put on a warm coat and hat and go for a chilly stroll.
- 8 Have a board game night.
- 9 Invest in a comfy pair of slippers.
- 10 Enjoy a cup of sugar-free hot cocoa – and spice it up with some fresh mint!

