

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

The holidays are upon us, and that probably means some crazy family fun. We'll explain why you should enjoy the season with a laugh and how to keep your family's smiles safe.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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When Mistletoe Kisses Go Wrong



Kissing under the mistletoe may seem like a charming tradition, but for people with peanut allergies, smooching under the berries can be anything but.

Even hours after consuming food, saliva can contain traces of peanut allergen. If you know that a loved one has a nut allergy, it is best to avoid any holiday dishes or desserts containing peanuts. According to research reported by the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology,¹ the allergen can linger in saliva for up to four hours after a meal. Though brushing teeth after eating does get rid of some of the allergen, it does not remove all of it. Be sure to double-check labels before eating, and alert others if you have a peanut allergy.

Symptoms of a nut allergy usually include itching, tingling, swelling, and coughing, but can even be as serious as anaphylaxis, which is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction that can cause the narrowing of airways in the lungs. If these symptoms occur, even on a small scale, a visit to the doctor is necessary – and may even be lifesaving.²

You don't have to avoid the mistletoe this holiday season – but be mindful of what you've eaten and who you're smooching!



The benefits of laughing are no joke



Holidays are a great time to spend with family, and laughing with relatives is one of the best parts of the season. Whether you're barely giggling or totally cracking up, laughter can have positive effects on your oral and overall health. Read on to learn what a good laugh can do for you.



Reduce your stress levels.

You might be stressed from the holiday bustle, and that can be bad news for your gums and teeth. Stress is a common cause of teeth grinding, which can damage your tooth enamel, make your jaw ache and more. Furthermore, it results in higher cortisol levels, increasing your risk for gum disease.³

By lowering cortisol levels,⁴ laughter can help improve immune system functioning.⁵ It also activates and then releases your stress response, leaving you with a relaxed feeling and reduced tension.⁶



Act as a mild workout.

Surprisingly, laughing can mimic exercise by burning calories and increasing your heart rate. In a study conducted by Vanderbilt University, participants burned 50 calories after just 10 to 15 minutes of laughter.⁷ Plus, laughter releases endorphins and stimulates multiple parts of the body, including the heart, lungs and muscles.⁸ Sharing a snicker at the family table just might help you burn off some of those extra calories from dessert.



Boost pain tolerance.

By releasing endorphins, laughter can increase pain tolerance. Some research even suggests that patients who laugh a significant amount need less pain medication following surgery.⁹ If you're experiencing a toothache, try watching a comedy to pass the time and ease your pain before your dental appointment.

Get your giggle on this holiday season and you just might see some healthy rewards.

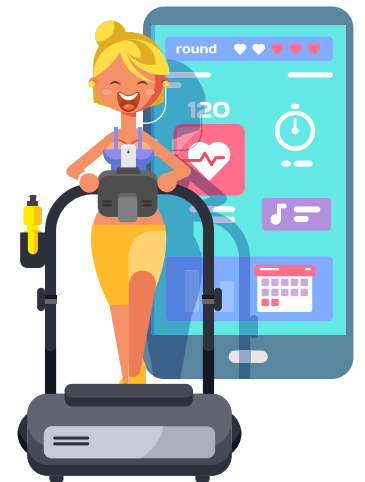
SMILE STATS



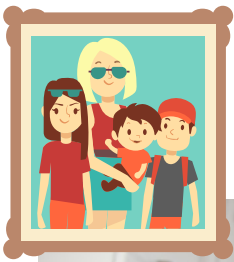
We're 30 times more likely to laugh in the presence of other people. Share a laugh with family members this holiday!¹⁰



Roughly 101.6 million people traveled during the holidays in 2016. If your family is going out of town, make sure everyone's prepared for mouth emergencies.¹¹



Just 10 to 15 minutes of laughter can burn up to 50 calories. Get your giggle on to work off those holiday splurges.¹²



KEEPING SMILES HAPPY WHEN FAMILY COMES TO TOWN



If you're hosting holiday celebrations at your place, add a little prep time to ensure your family's smiles stay sparkling – especially for relatives traveling from out of town.

Consider stopping by the store beforehand to stock up on these oral health supplies:

- **Extra floss, toothpaste and new toothbrushes** in case someone forgets theirs.
- **Mouth-friendly snacks** like broccoli, celery, carrots, cheese and nuts.
- **A baby gate** so younger guests don't venture into areas that pose a risk for mouth injuries.
- **Pain medications** such as acetaminophen for children and ibuprofen for adults.¹³
- **A dental emergency kit** with items like gauze, bandages, temporary filling material, dental wax for people with braces, dental cement for broken fillings or crowns and hydrogen peroxide for wound disinfection.

Unfortunately, no matter how prepared you are, mouth emergencies can still happen. Make sure you know when to seek professional care.



- **Toothaches** are **not** the time for home remedies. Call your dentist for their advice.
- Depending on the severity, **bitten tongues and lips** might be solvable at home, but if bleeding continues, you should go to the emergency room.
- Professional care is normally needed for **chipped teeth**.
- Emergency care is always required for **adult teeth that fall out from an injury**. If you address a lost tooth quickly enough, you might be able to save the tooth.¹⁴

Because it's the holidays, most regular dental offices will probably be closed, but that doesn't mean you don't have options for professional care. Start by contacting your personal dentist via an after-hours care number. Some dentists will see family members, depending on the circumstances, or can provide a referral to solve the problem. If you end up needing to find a new dentist, look for one in your family member's dental benefits network. Additionally, you might consider visiting urgent care or the emergency room. These facilities can help manage pain but won't be able to fix teeth. Your dental benefits don't cover these visits, so you'll need to check your medical plan.

Your family member will save the most money by visiting a dentist in their plan's network. If they're covered by Delta Dental, you can quickly find an in-network dentist with the Delta Dental website or our free mobile app.

Stay safe this season and be prepared for any surprises your family might encounter. Happy holidays!

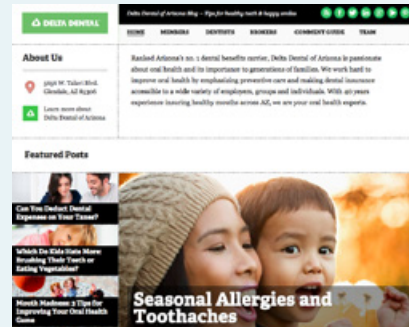
MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: HOT SPINACH AND ARTICHOKE DIP

Ingredients:			Directions:
			Boil spinach and artichokes in 1 cup of water until tender. Drain and discard liquid. Heat cream cheese in microwave for 1 minute or until hot and soft. Stir in all remaining ingredients and serve hot.
1 cup frozen spinach, thawed and chopped	1 ½ cups frozen artichoke hearts, thawed and chopped		
			
6 ounces cream cheese	¼ cup mayonnaise	1/3 cup grated parmesan	
			
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes	¼ teaspoon salt	¼ teaspoon garlic powder	

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