

# THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

Gear up for the holidays with our list of healthy stocking stuffers! Plus, find ways to relieve dry mouth and keep your smile healthy during cold and flu season.

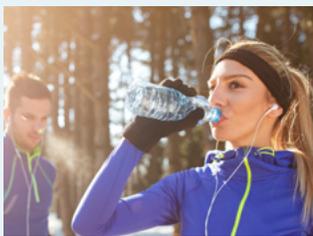
DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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## Healthy Holiday Gifts and Stocking Stuffers



Between all the cookies, candy canes and cocktails, healthy holiday gifts can be hard to find. Help your friends and family avoid a seasonal slump. Here are some healthy gifts for all ages—perfect for a fit and festive holiday!

### Trendy Trackers

From kids to grandparents, there's a wellness tracker for every age! Wearable wellness devices can count steps, heart rates—even bedtimes!

### Holiday Hydration

Water consumption is key to oral and overall health. Give the gift of H2O with a smart water bottle. These gadgets track hydration levels with a sensor and most integrate with a smartphone app. Water bottles also encourage drinking tap water, which has many benefits.

### Stocking Stuffer Staples

- **Toothbrushes:** Buy a basic brush, electric model or even a singing toothbrush! Get kids excited about brushing—stuff their stocking with a toothbrush featuring their favorite character.
- **Floss:** Pick a traditional minty flavor or go for something more extreme, like cupcake-flavored floss.
- **Mistletoe Mouth:** Give your significant other a minty mouth with items like gum (look for one that contains xylitol), lip balm or sugar-free mints. Some brands even release limited-edition flavors specifically for the holidays.

Now you're ready to enjoy a holiday stuffed with smiles. Don't forget to keep your spot on Santa's nice list—take care of your teeth!

# 4 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH HEALTHY DURING COLD AND FLU SEASON

If you're like the average adult, you'll get two or three colds a year, and they'll last between seven and 10 days.<sup>1</sup> And when flu season hits, about 8% of people in the U.S. get the flu.<sup>2</sup> Try these tips to ease cold and flu symptoms and protect your oral health while doing so:



## 1 Choose sugar-free cough drops and cold medications.

Cough drops help relieve nagging coughs and dry mouth. Check the label to avoid cough drops and liquid cold medications containing fructose or corn syrup. These sugars can lead to cavities, especially if you keep them in your mouth for a long time. Choose sugar-free lozenges and medications in tablet form instead. If you give children 4 years or older liquid cold medication sweetened with sugar, have them rinse with water afterward and brush their teeth if given right before bedtime or a nap.

## 2 Hydrate with the right kinds of fluids.

We've all heard you should drink fluids when fighting a cold. Just make sure you choose the best kinds:

- Water is the preferred choice, as it keeps you hydrated and washes away cavity-causing acids
- Sugar-free sports drinks can give you an energy boost
- Low-sugar juice can be consumed in moderation if followed with water to wash away sugars from your teeth

## 3 Maintain your daily oral health care routine.

You may not feel like doing much when you're sick, but don't let misery and exhaustion keep you from brushing twice a day and flossing daily.

## 4 Combat side effects.

Vomiting can be an unfortunate side effect of the flu. Not only does it dehydrate you, but stomach acids can also coat your teeth. Although you may be inclined to brush immediately, wait about 30 minutes. Brushing right after can wear down enamel softened by acid, so it's better to swish and spit with water and baking soda to clean your mouth. Baking soda helps neutralize stomach acid.

Nasal congestion is another side effect of the flu. A stuffy nose can lead to dry mouth, which may be worsened by over-the-counter medications, such as decongestants and antihistamines. Try adding moisture to the air with a humidifier. You may also want to use a saline nasal spray. Don't let dry mouth cause tooth decay and gum disease; drink plenty of water and suck on sugar-free hard candy to stimulate saliva and keep your mouth and throat moist.

If you start to feel under the weather during cold and flu season, take steps as soon as possible to protect your oral and overall health.

# SMILE STATS



Physician William Buchan's 1772 book "Domestic Medicine" has an odd cold remedy—drinking alcohol until you see double.<sup>3</sup>



On a 1911 expedition to the South Pole, it was so cold that one explorer's teeth chattered until they shattered.<sup>4</sup>



Jim Carey's chipped front tooth in "Dumb and Dumber" was real. He had a cap removed to play his wacky character.<sup>5</sup>

# 9 Ways to Relieve Dry Mouth



**Do you get dry eyes, dry skin and dry mouth this time of year? Many people tend to blame the cold, dry winter air that seeps into homes in much of the country. But it's not actually the main cause of dry mouth.**

Dry mouth can be caused by several things, including:

- Anxiety
- Dehydration
- Mouth breathing

But when dry mouth is persistent, it's usually because your salivary glands are not producing enough saliva. This can happen as a result of:

- Side effects from common medications, including those for high blood pressure, depression, anxiety and cancer
- Symptoms of certain diseases and health conditions—especially if you experience chronic dry mouth—like diabetes, Alzheimer's or Sjögren's syndrome
- Side effects from substance abuse, nerve damage or cancer treatments

Fortunately, there are several ways you can potentially find relief from dry mouth.

If you're experiencing dry mouth on a regular basis, make an appointment with your dentist or physician. They will help you determine the cause and offer treatment suggestions. They may offer solutions like these to alleviate the symptoms and stimulate saliva flow:

- Use an over-the-counter saliva substitute
- Limit caffeine, as it makes your mouth drier
- Sip water regularly
- Chew sugar-free gum
- Suck on sugar-free hard candies
- Use topical fluoride—available in some toothpastes, mouth rinses or gels—to protect your teeth<sup>6</sup>
- Avoid tobacco and alcohol because they can dry out your mouth
- Rinse with an alcohol-free mouthwash labeled specifically for dry mouth relief
- Run a humidifier to add moisture to the air at night

Dry mouth isn't just uncomfortable. Because of these oral health problems, it can also hurt your smile and quality of life. Talk to your dentist or physician if dry mouth persists.

# MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: TUSCAN BEAN SOUP

Ingredients:	Directions:
	In a pot, heat olive oil. Add carrots, onion, celery,
3 tablespoons olive oil	garlic, oregano, salt and pepper to hot oil. Cook
2 thickly sliced medium carrots	for 10 minutes, stirring often, until vegetables look
1 large coarsely chopped onion	softened. On a plate, mash half of the beans, then
1 coarsely chopped stalk celery	add them to the vegetables. Cook, stirring, for 2
1 finely chopped clove garlic	minutes. Add remaining beans to pot and stir well.
3 sprigs fresh oregano	Stir in chicken or vegetable stock and bring to boil.
1/4 teaspoon salt	Lower heat, partially cover with lid and simmer for
Black pepper to taste	20 minutes. Discard oregano sprigs. Add additional
2 cans (15 ounces each) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed	salt and pepper to taste. Mix in spinach and simmer
5 cups chicken or vegetable stock	for another 2 minutes.
4 cups baby spinach, stems removed	

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## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/features/rhinoviruses/index.html>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/keyfacts.htm>

<sup>3</sup><http://mentalfloss.com/article/91133/7-old-fashioned-remedies-common-cold>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/jan/14/penguin-eggs-worst-journey-world>

<sup>5</sup><https://ew.com/article/1995/02/03/jim-carreys-fake-tooth/>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.ada.org/en/member-center/oral-health-topics/fluoride-topical-and-systemic-supplements>