

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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5 Ways to Incorporate Oral Health into Your Holiday Traditions



With all the sweets and treats floating around during the holiday season, it can be hard to keep your smile twinkling. These tips will help you keep your smile merry, bright and cavity-free.

- 1. Stuff your stockings with something healthy.** 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. Snack and share treats wisely.** 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. Fill your mug with a warm drink.** 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 friends and family.
- 4. Cue up the seasonal jingles.** 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. Short holiday tunes can be great for helping you and your little ones brush for the right amount of time.
- 5. Give back to those in need.** 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 often in need of dental supplies.

Why Do You Have Morning Breath?



Morning breath, or halitosis if we want to be formal, is experienced by everyone to some degree. You're not alone!

While you're sleeping, your normal flow of saliva slows significantly, and the microorganisms (bacteria included) in your mouth get crazy eating, multiplying and eventually dying. These bacteria live in the mountains and valleys of your gums, your tongue and any other cozy places they can find, and release sulfur compounds. Those compounds are what produces the smelly odor you call morning breath.

What contributes to morning breath?

Lifestyle factors, like smoking or allergies, can contribute to morning breath. If you struggle with morning breath here are some common reasons your breath might seem less than lovely in the morning:

- **Snoring or mouth breathing** while sleeping dries your mouth
- **Daily medications** like antihistamines or prescribed blood pressure pills can cause dry mouth
- **Seasonal allergies** that result in increased post-nasal drainage — bacteria's favorite food
- **Cigarette smoking** can dry up saliva — your natural mouthwash
- **Poor dental hygiene** can leave food particles in your mouth overnight and cause plaque buildup

How to get rid of morning breath

You can do many things to mitigate bad morning breath like making sure you brush, floss and rinse every day, especially before going to bed. And try not to eat a midnight snack after brushing. You can also gargle with salt water to kill odor-causing bacteria and reduce post-nasal drip.

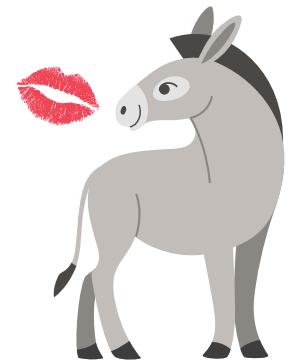
Make sure you keep your tongue clean. The tongue, especially in the way back, is one of bacteria's top hiding spots. Brushing your teeth and tongue daily is great, but you can step up your game with a tongue scraper.

Stay hydrated. Water flushes your system of toxins, aids in saliva production and reduces bad bacteria in your mouth. Jump-start your saliva production with a smile-friendly breakfast, including eggs, whole grains and fruit.

SMILE STATS



48% of adults have untagged themselves from a photo on Facebook because they were unhappy with their smile.¹



It was customary during the Middle Ages to kiss a donkey if you had a toothache.²



Sports-related injuries account for about 5 million missing teeth each year.³

Stress Less and Smile More



Studies show that stress is linked to headaches, depression, sleep issues, high blood pressure and heart issues. It can also harm your oral health in more ways than one.

But there is good news: Stress can be managed. Here's how stress and your mouth are connected, along with some practical stressbusters that will help keep you smiling.




How stress influences your oral health:

- **Teeth grinding or clenching**, also called bruxism, can be caused by stress. Bruxism may lead to headaches, jaw and tooth pain and worn down, chipped or cracked teeth.
- **Canker sores** can also be caused by stress. These white or yellow sores usually form on the tongue cheeks or lips — and can be quite painful.
- **Gum disease** is also more common in people who are stressed. It causes inflammation that can affect the mouth and other parts of the body. Serious gum disease can result in loose or lost teeth.

In addition, stress can lead to behaviors that have a negative influence on your oral health — including tobacco and alcohol usage and poor dietary and oral health habits. While stress won't completely disappear from your life, your mind, body and teeth can benefit from these stress reducers:

- **Identify your stress triggers:** Figure out if your stress is caused by your daily routine, sudden changes in your life or trauma. You may be able to control the situation or at least change your reaction to the stressors.
- **Ask for support from friends and family:** Those closest to you can help reduce your stress by acting as sounding boards or by assisting you with your tasks. Staying connected will also help distract you from stress.
- **Find relaxing activities:** Do whatever helps you relax — get a massage, listen to music, watch a comedy, take a soothing bath, or practice meditation, yoga, deep breathing or muscle relaxation.
- **Exercise regularly:** Whether it's biking, walking, participating in sports, swimming, jogging or gardening, exercise improves your sense of well-being, boosts your mood and relieves stress by releasing "feel good" endorphins.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** A balanced diet that prioritizes smile-friendly fruits, vegetables, dairy products, protein and whole grains will make you feel better and improve your oral health.
- **Get enough sleep:** Sleep allows your body and brain to recharge, which influences your mood, energy level and concentration.
- **Manage screen time:** Too much time spent with your phone, tablet, computer or television can stress you out — especially if you are an avid user of social media. Use some of that time to visit with others, go outside or read a book.
- **Avoid unhealthy habits:** Drinking beverages containing a lot of caffeine or alcohol, using tobacco or not eating a balanced diet are ineffective ways of dealing with stress.
- **Maintain a healthy smile:** Don't forget your daily oral health routine of brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste and flossing once a day. Getting gum disease and cavities will only add to stress levels.
- **Take time off:** People who take all of their paid time off are 56% happier with their health.⁴

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: BELL PEPPER PIZZAS

Ingredients:		Directions:
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-heat oven to 350 F. 2. Cut the bell pepper in half and lay the halves on a baking sheet, cut side up. 3. Add sauce, herbs, cheese and toppings of your choice. 4. Bake for 8 minutes, then switch to broil for 2 minutes to crisp the cheese. 5. Remove from the oven and enjoy!
1/4 cup spaghetti sauce or pizza sauce	1 large bell pepper	
		
Herbs and spices to taste—try oregano, basil and parsley	1/4 cup grated mozzarella cheese	
	Toppings of your choice	

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SOURCES

¹ <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/study-shows-that-one-third-of-american-adults-are-unhappy-with-their-smile-179281261.html>
² Kanner L. Folklore of the Teeth . New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923
³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4482297/>
⁴ <https://www.inc.com/tom-popomaronis/pack-your-bags-not-taking-a-vacation-is-costing-america-62-billion-every-year-heres-why.html>