

# THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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## Is Your Child's Dentist Their New Superhero?



Lasers can be fascinating for kids—from their favorite movies to laser tag. While lasers have been used by some dentists for more than 20 years, they are becoming an increasingly popular option for treating children.

**How does laser dentistry work?** The dental tool produces a laser beam, which delivers energy in the form of light. That light is aimed at a target like a tooth or soft tissue (such as the gums).<sup>1</sup> Depending on the procedure, the laser can cut, reshape or even remove the target.

**When are lasers used for children?** Laser dentistry is used to treat a number of conditions in both adults and children. Lasers can sometimes be used in helping detect, prevent and treat cavities in children. Lasers can also be used to:

- Help expose teeth that have been unable to break through the gums
- Perform a frenectomy, which removes tissue that is causing feeding problems for infants
- Remove diseased or damaged pulp tissue from a tooth to protect healthy tissue

**What are the advantages of lasers for children?** Lasers aren't appropriate for all dental procedures, but they can make some visits much more positive due to:

- Less pain, which results in a reduced need for anesthesia and needles
- No heat or vibration and little noise compared to a traditional drill
- Minimal soreness, bleeding and inflammation
- Decreased need for stitches on soft tissues
- Increased cooperation from children

Talk to your dentist to see if lasers are used in their practice and if laser dentistry is right for your child!

# Common Causes for a Cracked Tooth



Generally, teeth are quite durable, designed to hold up to daily crunching, biting, and chewing of all kinds of foods. Sometimes, however, a one-off incident like a fall or blow to the mouth—or a chronic condition like nighttime teeth grinding—can generate enough force to crack or fracture a tooth.

People with a history of tooth decay, large dental fillings and root canals may also be more susceptible to a fracture.<sup>2</sup> Want to learn how to avoid a cracked tooth? Read on for some of the most common causes.

## Most Common Causes of a Cracked Tooth

A cracked tooth can be the result of many possible incidents. In some cases, you may have little idea what caused the fracture, especially if it forms gradually over time. Here are the most common causes of a cracked tooth:

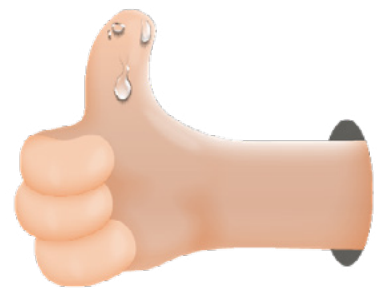
- **Teeth grinding:** Chronic teeth grinding, also known as bruxism, can cause cracked teeth due to repetitive stress and friction. Since individuals often grind their teeth at night, they may not even know it's happening.
- **Weak teeth:** Weak teeth, caused by long-term wear or erosion of enamel, or lost tooth structure from large fillings, are far more susceptible to cracks.
- **Hard foods:** Hard candies, stale bread, ice cubes and unpopped popcorn kernels are all frequent perpetrators of cracked teeth.
- **Accidental blows to the mouth:** A direct hit to the mouth can cause chipped teeth, fractures and other serious oral injuries. Most often these are the result of a sports incident, fall or auto accident.
- **Extreme temperature changes:** When tooth enamel is rapidly exposed to opposite temperature extremes—for example, immediately biting into an ice cube after burning your mouth on a hot cup of tea—it can lead to hairline cracks.
- **Age:** With a lifetime of use comes weaker enamel and teeth that are generally more susceptible to injury.<sup>3</sup>

A cracked tooth is something dentists see regularly. If diagnosed early, the problem can usually be solved with a simple dental procedure. Avoid cracked teeth by keeping up with your routine dental exams and asking your dentist about a nightguard if you grind your teeth or a mouthguard if you play sports.

# SMILE STATS



Lasers are used in many movies, most famously when the Death Star fires a superlaser at Alderaan in “Star Wars”.<sup>4</sup>



Linus from “Peanuts” was a philosopher and intellectual but also sucked his thumb.<sup>5</sup>



During the Middle Ages, Germans with toothaches could be advised to kiss a donkey to relieve the pain.<sup>6</sup>

# Temporary Baby Teeth Have a Long-Lasting Effect



**Baby teeth aren't meant to be permanent. They appear from about the time a child is 6 months old until around their third birthday and they start to fall out when a child is around 6 years old.**

Because they're temporary placeholders for permanent teeth, issues with baby teeth may seem like no big deal. But baby teeth actually serve critical purposes.

## **Baby teeth are important for childhood development.**

Healthy baby teeth help young children speak clearly, express emotion and chew properly. Missing or decayed teeth can make it difficult to eat certain foods.

## **They have an effect on permanent teeth.**

Baby teeth hold space for adult teeth to grow into. Tooth decay or infection in baby teeth can cause pain and tooth loss. It may also lead to crowding or crookedness in the permanent teeth developing beneath them. That's why cavities in baby teeth must be treated with the same importance as permanent teeth.

If a baby tooth is knocked out, it can cause damage to its permanent replacement, including issues with alignment, enamel and color. The younger the child, the higher the risk for damage to the permanent tooth. If your child loses a baby tooth too early—such as from tooth decay or an accident—ask your dentist if a space maintainer is needed.

## **Caring for baby teeth.**

Now that you know the importance of baby teeth, here are some ways to help avoid problems with them:

1. Make your baby's first dentist visit within 6 months of getting their first tooth and no later than their first birthday.
2. Avoid transferring cavity-causing bacteria to your baby's mouth. Don't clean their pacifier with your mouth or share spoons, straws or other utensils.
3. Prevent baby bottle tooth decay by not putting sweet drinks (like juice) in your baby's bottle.
4. Brush teeth gently with a child-size toothbrush and a small amount of fluoride toothpaste (about the size of a grain of rice) once they appear until age 3.
5. Help your child break their thumb-sucking habit before adult teeth appear. While it's normal for children to suck their thumbs, it can cause problems with speech and tooth alignment.
6. Begin weaning your child from using a pacifier by the time they turn 2.

Keeping your child's baby teeth in good shape can set them up for a lifetime of healthy smiles.

# MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: EASY BROCCOLI, CHEESE AND EGG MUFFINS

## Ingredients:



Olive oil cooking spray



1 cup broccoli, chopped



8 eggs



2 tsp. thyme



1 tsp. pepper



1/2 tsp. sea salt



3/4 cup Monterey Jack shredded cheese



1/4 cup unsweetened coconut, soy or almond milk

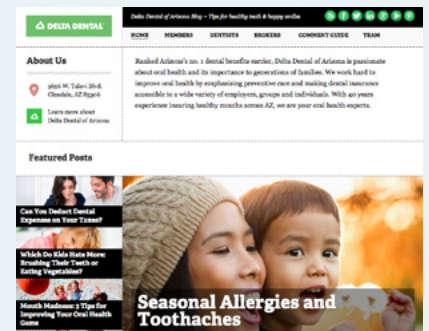
## Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Spray a 12-cup muffin tin with cooking spray.
3. Add broccoli to the muffin tin.
4. Whisk eggs, milk, thyme, salt and pepper in a large bowl.
5. Spread egg mixture evenly into the muffin tin, filling each spot about 3/4 full.
6. Top each muffin with cheese.
7. Bake for 20 minutes.

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[deltadentalazblog.com](http://deltadentalazblog.com)



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## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup><https://www.healthline.com/health/laser-dentistry>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.columbiaendodontists.com/endodontics-procedures/cracked-teeth.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/teeth-gums-age#1>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.forbes.com/sites/ethansiegel/2015/08/15/the-science-of-the-death-star-the-physics-of-destroying-an-earth-sized-planet/#c8d47ac3b410>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.peanuts.com/characters/linus/>

<sup>6</sup><https://bda.org/library/history/Documents/Featured%20folklore%20-%20-%20Animals%20in%20Dental%20Folklore.pdf>