

# THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

With the new year finally here, we're focused on starting oral health habits on the right foot by scheduling dental visits and understanding how your dentist helps your child's smile.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

JANUARY 2019

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## Reenergize Your Oral Health Care Routine



**Looking for an oral health resolution that's easy to keep? Resolve to try something new for your smile this year. An easy change, like testing out a new toothpaste flavor, will help you get a fresh start on good oral health habits:**

**Switch from a manual to an electric toothbrush.** Simply changing the type of toothbrush you use may help reenergize your oral health care routine. While both types can be equally effective, electric toothbrushes may be helpful in brushing hard-to-reach spots for people with arthritis or disabilities. Manual or electric, it's always important to brush your teeth twice a day.

**Try a new toothpaste.** Kids aren't the only ones who get to have fun with flavors. Off-the-wall varieties like vanilla ice cream or chocolate could make brushing more exciting. If you prefer mint, toothpastes with whitening and baking soda may give your smile an extra sparkle. Whatever toothpaste you choose this year, be sure the active ingredient list includes fluoride to effectively fight tooth decay.

**Try a different type of floss.** Everyone should floss at least once a day, but there are different ways to get the job done. Dental tape is extra-wide floss for people with a lot of bridgework or large spaces between teeth, and floss picks provide an easy-to-use design that you can hold with one hand. Like toothpaste, floss also comes in unique flavors like cupcake.

**Find a new dentist.** Maybe you've been putting off an appointment because you didn't "click" with your dentist. Delta Dental makes it easy to find a new dentist in your area with our online "Find a Dentist" tool and on the Delta Dental mobile app. Check with friends to see if they would recommend their dentists. To save costs, search for dentists who are in your plan's network (depending on your dental plan, you may need to visit a network dentist in order to use your benefits).

# THE ROLE A DENTIST PLAYS IN YOUR CHILD'S ORAL HEALTH



**Schedules may get hectic with school, extracurriculars and homework, but making it to the dentist is always worth it. Dentists play a central role in children's oral health that goes beyond checking teeth for cavities.**

The most obvious benefit dentists provide is preventive care through regular exams and cleanings. During these appointments, dentists or hygienists remove plaque and tartar to prevent the formation of cavities, which is one of the most common chronic diseases in childhood. For additional cavity prevention, they can place sealants on teeth that have the highest risk for tooth decay. This preventive care and consistent monitoring help dentists prevent or curb the effects of dental threats like thumb sucking, teeth crowding, fluorosis, neglecting oral health and more.<sup>1</sup>

Dentists are a meaningful part of educating kids on proper oral health habits. While smile maintenance might be straightforward to adults, children have to learn it all from scratch. Dentists understand how their cognition develops and how to properly explain dental care principles in kid-friendly language. They can help convey the importance of brushing, flossing, eating healthy and visiting the dentist.<sup>2</sup> And because parents have the most important role in establishing healthy smiles, dentists advise them on providing proper instruction and how to model good oral health habits.<sup>3</sup>

Children's attitudes toward dental care begin taking shape in early childhood, and dentists can help ensure those attitudes are pleasant. Dentists provide positive reinforcement that creates enjoyable memories of appointments. When the exam is over, dentists often give kids toys or other rewards, and they build a rapport to establish trusting relationships. On the flip side, by preventing cavities and toothaches, the dentist minimizes unpleasant experiences, helping children avoid anxiety toward dental appointments.

Finding a dentist you trust early on and maintaining regular visits is an important part of a child's dental care. It not only helps teeth stay healthy, but it also teaches children the proper way to take care of their smile for years to come.

# SMILE STATS



Annual maximums for many dental plans restart on January 1. Get the most from your plan by scheduling an appointment today!



Over one-third of children 12-19 have dental sealants. Talk to your dentist to learn if sealants are a good option for your children.<sup>4</sup>



Preventive care like visiting the dentist is one of the best ways to keep your family's smiles healthy. Starting early is a big boost for healthy smiles!

# Preventive Care in the New Year



If you and your family's annual maximum restarts in the new year, now is a great time to schedule checkups and cleanings. With Delta Dental and most dental offices, you can take steps to make scheduling quick and easy. Check out our tips for fitting regular appointments into your busy schedule.

## Find a convenient time

Look for a dentist with a schedule that works for you. Some dental offices may offer hours outside the typical 9-to-5 schedule to accommodate working families. Once you chose a dentist, schedule your appointment at the same time as the rest of your family to avoid the hassle of multiple visits. If you're scheduling appointments for the full year, pair them with other annual events like spring cleaning or yearly physician visits to build regular visits into to your family's yearly routines.

## Access scheduling tools

If you're covered by Delta Dental, you can download the Delta Dental mobile app to conveniently schedule appointments from your phone.\* Additionally, many dental offices will allow you to schedule appointments months in advance. Getting it on the calendar early can help you avoid conflicting events.

## Take advantage of reminders

A possible culprit for skipping the dentist is forgetting the visit you already scheduled. Luckily, there are lots of tools to help. Remember to program the appointment time into your phone or write it on your calendar. You can also ask the dental office receptionist how your appointment reminder will be sent. Choose the method that's most convenient for you such as a text message, email or friendly phone call. You may even consider requesting a reminder letter from your dental office.

Schedules can get hectic any time of the year. But by scheduling smart, you'll ensure your smile receives the dental care you need to stay healthy.

*\*Appointment scheduling is powered by our partners at Brighter™. Availability may vary by geographic area and individual dentist participation in Brighter Schedule™.*

# MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: GREEK YOGURT HUMMUS

## Ingredients:



1 clove garlic



1 tablespoon water



½ teaspoon salt



Sliced celery and carrots for dipping



½ cup Greek yogurt



1 can (16-ounces)  
low-sodium chickpeas, drained



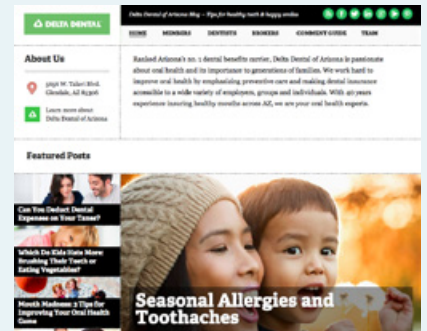
1 teaspoon lemon juice

## Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor. Pulse initially and then blend until smooth.<sup>5</sup> Dig in!

## WANT MORE ORAL HEALTH TIPS AND NEWS?

VISIT THE DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA BLOG  
[deltadentalazblog.com](http://deltadentalazblog.com)



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## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup><https://www.colgateprofessional.com/education/patient-education/topics/oral-care-for-children/childhood-oral-hygiene-and-the-role-of-parents>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.colgate.com/en-us/oral-health/life-stages/childrens-oral-care/dental-health-for-kids-a-parents-guide-1013>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.colgateprofessional.com/education/patient-education/topics/oral-care-for-children/childhood-oral-hygiene-and-the-role-of-parents>

<sup>4</sup><http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,DD134>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/nutrition/super-bowl-recipes>