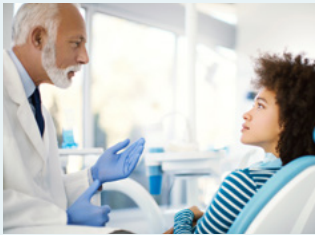


# THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

OCTOBER 2022

## OPEN WIDE SEE WHAT'S INSIDE



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## Halloween Doesn't Have to Be Tricky for Teeth



**As your little goblins and ghouls get ready for another year of trick-or-treating, you can make a few preparations to ensure your kids have a healthy Halloween.**

- If you're like the 89% of parents who allow their children to indulge in some sweets after a night of door-knocking, plan to allot just a few pieces at a time, preferably with meals.<sup>1</sup> The extra saliva produced while eating a meal helps wash sugar away from teeth. Plus, the fewer times a day teeth are exposed to sugar, the better.
- Almost 80% of parents admit to getting into their kids' candy stash - so that advice about eating candy after meals goes for parents, too!<sup>1</sup>
- If you don't hand out candy, you won't have candy bowl leftovers to raid! Nearly 25% of people distribute something other than sugary treats for Halloween, including toys, money, pencils and popcorn.<sup>1</sup>
- Kids are less likely to gorge on candy on a full belly. To prevent them from snacking as they go from door to door, make sure they have a good dinner first.
- Check with your child's dentist to see if he or she offers a candy buyback program. Many dentists will purchase treats from kids after Halloween - a pretty sweet deal!

For more tips and tricks to make sure your household has a healthy Halloween, be sure to visit [DeltaDentalAZBlog.com](http://DeltaDentalAZBlog.com) and search "Halloween".

# AN ALTERNATIVE TO OPIOIDS FOR DENTAL DISCOMFORT



To fight the opioid crisis in the United States, the Department of Health and Human Services recently provided almost \$2 billion in funding to expand access to treatment and make more effective use of data.<sup>2</sup> The dental community is also doing its part to help combat the issue.

Some dental procedures, emergencies and surgeries, such as removing wisdom teeth or inserting dental implants, can cause short-term discomfort. To bring relief, dentists may prescribe medications. However, a study in *The Journal of the American Dental Association* reports that extensive research shows the effectiveness of over-the-counter medications. Combined with concerns about the potential dangers of opioids, it has resulted in less emphasis on prescribing opioids for dental issues.

## Over-the-counter relief has been proven more effective

Studies show a combination of ibuprofen (Advil® and Motrin®) and acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to be more effective for dental pain than prescription opioids like hydrocodone and oxycodone (e.g., Vicodin® and OxyContin®).<sup>3</sup> In addition, over-the-counter medications are less likely than narcotic opioids to cause side effects such as addiction.

As a result, the American Dental Association:

- Emphasizes the use of non-narcotic medication as the first line of therapy for acute dental pain
- States opioids may still be appropriate if the original treatment does not work<sup>4</sup>
- Endorses mandatory continuing education for dentists in prescribing opioids
- Supports limits on dosage and duration of use of prescription opioids<sup>5</sup>

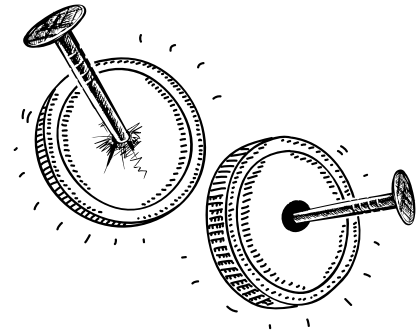
## Opioids pose potential dangers

Opioids are generally safe when used for a brief period to relieve oral pain, as prescribed by a dentist or other health care professional.<sup>4</sup> However, if used for longer periods or at a higher than prescribed dosage, opioids can lead to a risk of addiction, overdose and even death.<sup>6</sup>

Every day, an average of 46 Americans die from prescription opioid overdose, accounting for 35% of all opioid deaths.<sup>6</sup>

Make sure to discuss options for relief, including over-the-counter medications, with your dentist. Let your dentist know if you are taking other medications or if you or family members have had substance abuse problems. For any medication, ask questions so you clearly understand the directions and possible risks.

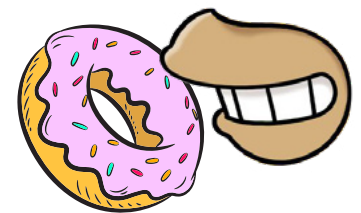
# SMILE STATS



In Kathmandu, people with dental problems nail a coin to a “toothache tree” as an offering to the Newar god of the toothache.<sup>7</sup>



An infected tooth cleaned with flint tools more than 14,000 years ago is the oldest known example of dental surgery.<sup>8</sup>



“The Last Exit to Springfield” segment of *The Simpsons*, in which Homer saves his dental plan, is often cited as the series’ best episode.<sup>9</sup>

# Another good reason to avoid substance abuse



From “meth mouth” to a host of other problems, one of the most obvious effects of drug abuse is the damage it can do to oral health. Fortunately, treatment and support are always available to help beat addiction. And there are many ways to help avoid substance abuse and its effects altogether.

## Common oral health problems caused by drug abuse

Drug usage can often result in multiple, serious oral health issues. Here are some of the most frequent:

- **Methamphetamine (meth)** is highly acidic, can cause dry mouth and may trigger cravings for sweets. As a result, meth use often leads to severe tooth decay, gum disease, and broken, stained and rotten teeth that can fall out.<sup>10</sup>
- **Heroin** abuse can cause decayed and lost teeth, along with increased frequency of gum disease.<sup>11</sup> This is often due to poor oral hygiene and malnutrition caused by lack of appetite.<sup>12</sup>
- **Cocaine** is very acidic, so smoking crack-cocaine or putting powdered cocaine in the mouth can break down tooth enamel and cause decay and gum disease.<sup>13</sup>
- **Ecstasy** can cause dry mouth, cavities and gum disease. Because ecstasy is a stimulant, users experience an increase in energy and activity. This leads to grinding and clenching of teeth, which often results in fracture or wear.<sup>14</sup>
- **Marijuana** is no longer illegal in all states, but it can still have negative effects on oral health. Heavy marijuana smokers are three times more likely to have severe gum disease than those who don't smoke marijuana.<sup>15</sup> Smoking can also cause cavities and oral cancer.

## Treatment and support are always available

Overcoming addiction starts with making a commitment to change, setting goals and leaning on friends and family for support. Free, confidential help is provided 24/7 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).<sup>16</sup>

Addressing stress in positive ways can be crucial to avoiding drug use. Experts recommend these natural mood lifters:<sup>17,18</sup>

- Release endorphins with exercise
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Get plenty of sleep
- Enjoy sunshine and fresh air
- Practice meditation
- Pamper yourself

Try mixing positive stress busters and rewarding activities into your life to see what works best for you or your loved ones.



# MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: CHIA PUDDING

## Ingredients:



3-4 tablespoons chia seeds



1 cup milk



1/2 tablespoon sugar substitute  
(look for one with xylitol)



1/4 teaspoon vanilla

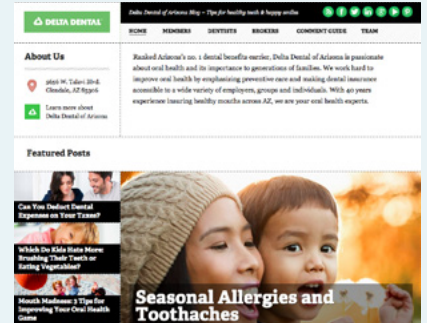
## Directions:

1. Stir chia seeds, milk, sweetener and vanilla in bowl or mason jar.
2. Let set for 5 minutes.
3. Stir or shake to break up clumps.
4. Cover and put mixture in fridge for 1 to 2 hours or overnight.
5. If mixture is not thick enough, add another tablespoon of chia seeds, stir and refrigerate for another 30 minutes.

WANT MORE ORAL HEALTH TIPS AND NEWS?

VISIT THE DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA BLOG

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



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## SOURCES

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- <sup>3</sup><https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/news/20180425/advil-tylenol-better-than-opioids-for-dental-pain>
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