

grin!®



news, notes &
entertainment to
keep your smile
healthy & happy

spring
2016

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**Keep Braces and
Retainers Clean**

**How Allergies Affect
Your Teeth**

**Fillings Through
the Centuries**

**Why So Sensitive?
Reasons for Tooth Pain**

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tools of the trade: get to
know your way around the
dentist’s tray

cavity-free calendar

April

Pediatric dentists receive training on how to care for children with special needs. If you have an autistic child, **Autism Awareness Month** is a great time to start a dialogue with your pediatric dentist. Check out page 4 for more information about autism and oral health.



May

During **Older Americans Month**, make sure older relatives in assisted-living facilities receive proper oral health care. Ask how staff are trained to help residents with their daily and ongoing dental needs.

June

For **Cancer Awareness Month**, ask your dentist for an oral cancer screening. When this deadly disease is detected early, your chances of survival are significantly higher.



two-word answers

Q: If you floss once daily, about how much floss will you use in a lifetime?



A: 5 miles.





on topic with dr. kohn

oral health for children with autism

Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Policy, Bill Kohn, DDS. Formerly the director of the Division of Oral Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Kohn has timely tips and valuable insights to share as our resident dental expert.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that over 3 million Americans have some form of autism, a complex developmental disability. People with autism often have communication difficulties and social/behavioral challenges that make it hard to seek regular dental care. Additionally, they may have motor coordination problems that make daily oral hygiene more difficult. This can lead to periodontal (gum) disease and high levels of tooth decay.

Most children with mild to moderate autism can be successfully cared for in a general dental practice setting, so parents should help children establish a good relationship with the dentist early. Finding a dentist comfortable with and experienced in treating children with developmental disorders can help with home care and successful, positive trips to the dental office. Visit bit.ly/1Gzc7pZ for more information and resources on oral health care for people with autism.

mouth-friendly recipe: “blueberry pie” oatmeal

Who says pie has to be bad for you? This version of the classic dessert replaces the crust with heart-healthy oatmeal and the sugary pie filling with blueberries and a bit of honey. It'll satisfy your pie craving and give you a boost of tooth-friendly vitamins C and K.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 1 1/2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 cup dried oats, cooked

Directions:

Combine blueberries, water, honey, vanilla and salt in a small saucepan. Sprinkle cornstarch on top and mix it in well. Bring to a boil, then let the blueberry “pie filling” simmer for 5 minutes or until thick. Pour over cooked dried oats.





readers ask, we answer

Sylvia asks:

“When it comes to avoiding stains, is tea any better for my teeth than coffee?”

Hi, Sylvia. Both tea and coffee are culprits of tooth staining, thanks to their dark color and acid content. But green and black teas may stain teeth worse than coffee because they contain higher levels of tannins, plant-based compounds that can cause staining. What’s more, the high temperatures of these beverages cause teeth to expand and contract slightly. This allows dark stains to penetrate tiny lines and micro-cracks in the enamel. Your dentist or hygienist can often remove marks like these during a professional cleaning. If you’re concerned about the color of your teeth, talk with your dentist. You may also want to consider cutting back on tea, coffee, soy sauce, curry and wine, or rinsing your mouth after you finish.



*Have a question you'd like us to answer?
Send it to grin@deltadental.com, and it
could be featured in an upcoming issue.*

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Just like doctors and nurses, dental professionals have a host of tools to help them do their jobs. These instruments help keep your teeth healthy, but they can look intimidating to patients with dental anxiety.

Reduce that anxiety by getting the details on what each instrument is and how it's used. The next time you see them lined up on your dentist's tray, you'll know what to expect.



MOUTH PROP

Also known as a bite block, cheek retractor or “tooth pillow,” this device fits inside the mouth to keep it open. It gives your dentist easy access and visibility.



SALIVA EJECTOR

A favorite of kids everywhere, this curved tube sucks saliva and excess liquid from the patient's mouth.

MIRROR

About the size of a quarter, a dental mirror is usually positioned on an angle at the end of a small handle. It helps show dentists hard-to-see spots in the mouth such as the back of teeth. The mirror can also reflect light into the mouth to make it easier to see.

DENTAL EXPLORER AND PERIODONTAL PROBE

These little instruments are appropriately named — they allow the dentist to explore further into mouths. They're used to check for plaque and tartar below the gum line, identify cavities, measure gum pockets and more.

DRILL

The dental drill, which is properly called a dental handpiece, is used to remove tooth decay, get teeth ready for fillings or crowns, and clean and shape root canals. Dental procedures that use a drill require anesthesia, so you won't feel any pain during the treatment. If the sound of the drill bothers you, ask your dentist if you can listen to music on headphones.

EXCAVATOR

Dental excavators are small tools that help your dentist remove decay to prepare teeth for fillings or other dental work.

DENTAL SCALER

You've probably seen this tool during a dental cleaning. It scrapes stains and tartar from the teeth and roots to help prevent tooth decay and gum disease.



How **seasonal allergies** can affect your oral health

When allergy season is in full swing, your dental health may not be on the top of your mind. But a case of hay fever can have an impact on your teeth and gums. Here's what to look out for and how to protect your mouth.



Tooth pain

Sinus pain is a common symptom of your immune system waging war on pollen and dust. The hollow spaces in your head fill up with mucus, causing aches and pains in your face. The maxillary sinuses, the largest sinuses in your face, are located above your mouth. When pressure builds in these sinuses, it can push down on the roots of your upper molars. You may experience sensitivity to hot and cold or notice pain that shifts as you sit, stand or lie down.

Try **antihistamines** to see if you can get any relief. If your toothache goes away after taking antihistamines, the tooth is likely allergy-related. But if it persists after your allergy symptoms disappear, or occurs somewhere other than your upper molars, talk to your dentist. The pain may be caused by decay.



Dry mouth

Allergies can cause dry mouth in two ways. First, you're more likely to **breathe through your mouth**

when your nose is stuffy. Second, many antihistamines include dry mouth as a **side effect**. This condition isn't just uncomfortable — it also increases your chances of developing cavities, gum disease and bad breath. One of the main functions of saliva is to wash away

harmful bacteria. That means a dry mouth is the perfect place for cavity-causing bacteria to multiply.



Sore throat

An irritated sore throat is a common result of allergies, caused by **postnasal drip**. This type of sore throat can cause bad breath, but since it originates in the throat, brushing your teeth won't do much to help.

What to do

Follow these tips to keep your dental health in check.



Stay hydrated. Drink lots of water to keep your mouth and body hydrated. Not only can this counteract the effects of dry mouth, it can also help your body flush away excess mucus.



Gargle with salt water. Dissolve a tablespoon of salt water in a glass of warm water. Gargle and spit until all the water is gone. The salt can help draw mucus out of your sinuses, relieving your symptoms. It also cuts down on harmful bacteria in your mouth and throat, reducing the effects of bad breath and plaque.



Keep brushing and flossing. A serious attack of allergies is no excuse to slack on your oral health routine. Regular brushing and flossing are especially important when you're experiencing dry mouth, so make sure you're brushing twice and flossing at least once a day.



Treat your allergies. Controlling your allergies can help reduce their impact on your mouth. Avoid known triggers, and talk to your doctor about long-term treatment options, such as prescription medication or allergy shots.



Talk to your dentist. Continue going to scheduled dental appointments. If you're experiencing tooth pain, mention it to your dentist. Your dentist can help you figure out whether it's allergy-related or caused by other problems.

Why so sensitive?

At some point, you may have experienced a little sensitivity when eating, perhaps after enjoying an ice-cold beverage or after biting into something hot. Even breathing a blast of cold air can cause discomfort. Why do some people experience sensitivity while others don't? Here are some common causes of tooth sensitivity.



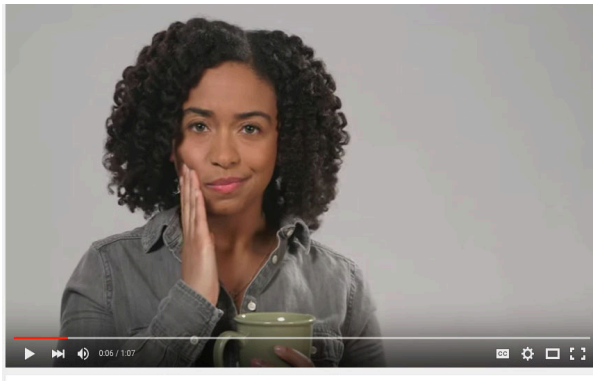
Exposed Dentin

Underneath the hard, shiny enamel of each tooth is a protective layer called dentin. If your enamel has worn away, your teeth may be very sensitive. Unlike enamel, dentin is soft and porous and can allow hot, cold and acidic foods and drinks to stimulate the nerves inside your tooth. An overly aggressive brushing technique can cause the gums to recede and expose the dentin.



Whitening Treatments

From simple whitening toothpastes and rinses to professional in-office applications, tooth whitening treatments can cause extra sensitivity. If your quest to make your teeth pearly white is affecting their sensitivity, your dentist may recommend fewer applications or a lower-strength treatment.



[Watch the video](#)



Periodontal (Gum) Disease

Periodontal disease can destroy the bone and gum tissue, leaving the root of the tooth exposed. To catch gum disease early, visit your dentist for regular cleanings and exams.



Tooth Grinding/Clenching

Sensitivity can also be caused by tooth grinding or clenching. Some patients are unaware they grind or clench their teeth because it only occurs in their sleep. Wearing a nighttime mouthguard can help. Talk to your dentist for additional suggestions and treatment options.



Tooth Decay

Don't rule out cavities. Decay can wear down your enamel and eventually infect your tooth pulp, causing discomfort when you chew, drink hot or cold liquids or breathe in cold air. If the decay has reached the pulp, you may need a root canal.

Make sure to mention your sensitivity to your dentist. He or she can check your mouth for underlying problems and suggest ways to reduce the discomfort.



history of oral health: fill 'er up!

Amalgam and resin composite are standard materials for fillings these days, but centuries ago, dentists had to get a little more creative when treating a decayed tooth.



Ancient Mayan dentists used jade to create fillings that were both functional and decorative.



In 2012, scientists discovered a **beeswax filling** in a 6,500-year-old human tooth found in Slovenia. It's the oldest evidence of dental fillings on record.



Dentists in medieval England used an interesting mix of items to create fillings: **myrrh, beeswax, arsenic, sulphur and pig grease**.



CT scans of an Egyptian mummy revealed that the person likely died from a sinus infection caused by numerous cavities and abscesses. Scientists found linen packed into the mummy's largest tooth cavity and believe **it was likely soaked in medicinal fig juice or cedar oil**.



A French dentist who **mixed silver coins with mercury invented the first modern-day dental amalgam in 1826**. Today, dental amalgam is a stable alloy made by combining silver, tin, copper and other metallic elements.



TOTALLY WIRED

Tips for Caring for Retainers and Braces



RETAINERS

- 1. Take out before eating.** Remove your retainer before you eat so it doesn't trap food and plaque. Carry your retainer case with you, and pop your retainer in before meals. Never wrap a retainer in a napkin or tissue — you or someone else might accidentally throw it in the trash!
- 2. First clean, then store.** Rinse and brush your retainer regularly. This helps remove tartar that can build up on the surface. You can use a regular toothbrush and toothpaste or soak your retainer in a glass of water with some baking soda. If you don't have to wear a retainer very often (for example, you only wear it every other night), store it in a container with sufficient airflow so it doesn't breed mold and bacteria.
- 3. Remove when brushing.** Never brush your teeth while wearing a retainer. You'll miss large areas of your mouth, and the toothbrush may accidentally displace the retainer. Instead, brush and floss after you've removed the appliance, and then brush it separately.



BRACES

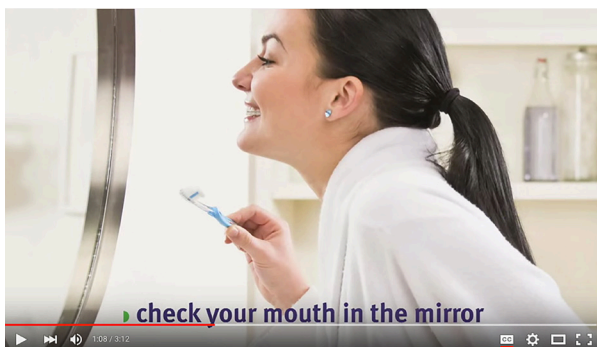
- 1 Brush carefully.** Don't let food get trapped in your braces. Use a soft-bristled brush to remove debris from your teeth, brackets and wires. If your current toothbrush isn't doing the job, consider getting an orthodontic toothbrush. With V-shaped bristles, these toothbrushes are designed to fit around braces.



- 2 Brush in between your brackets.** Use an interdental toothbrush to clean the spaces between the metal and your teeth.



- 3 Don't forget to floss.** Flossing every day is especially important when you've got braces. Having trouble getting the floss under the wires? Just use a floss threader with regular floss, or buy special stiff-tipped floss made for braces wearers.



[Watch the video](#)

- 4 Stay on top of your appointments.** Make sure to visit your orthodontist for regular follow-ups. You'll also want to make appointments with your regular dentist for cleanings and exams. Some dentists will ask your orthodontist to remove the wires before a cleaning, while others will clean around them.

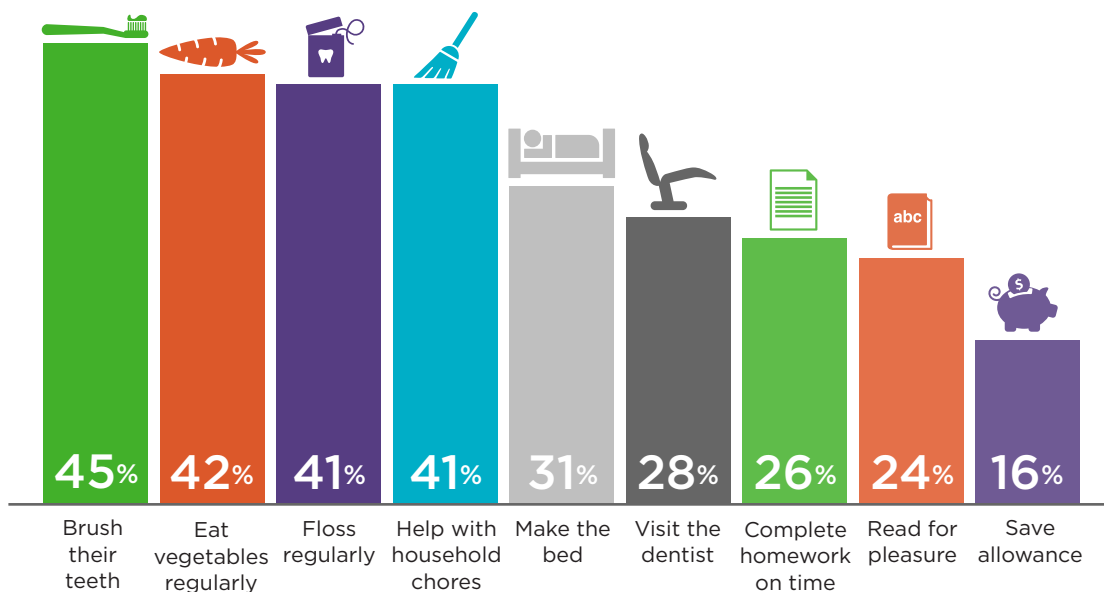
keeping you covered: 2015 children's oral health survey

As the leading dental carrier in the United States, Delta Dental covers nearly 70 million smiles — including millions of our nation's youngest residents. That's why we commissioned the Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Survey, a poll that spotlights the importance of children's oral health. Together with Kelton, a leading global research firm, we surveyed 1,325 parents nationwide about their children's oral health habits. Here are a few of the key findings.

Parents Struggle to Keep Their Children's Oral Health on Track

What are the hardest things to get your kids to do?

(Multiple choice)



Nearly half (45%) of parents reported that **getting their kids to brush their teeth** is a struggle. Flossing was close behind, chosen by 41% of parents.

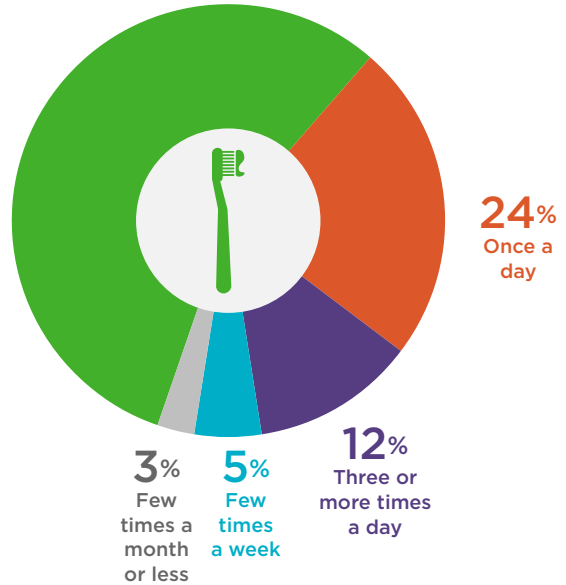
Areas for Improvement

Brushing

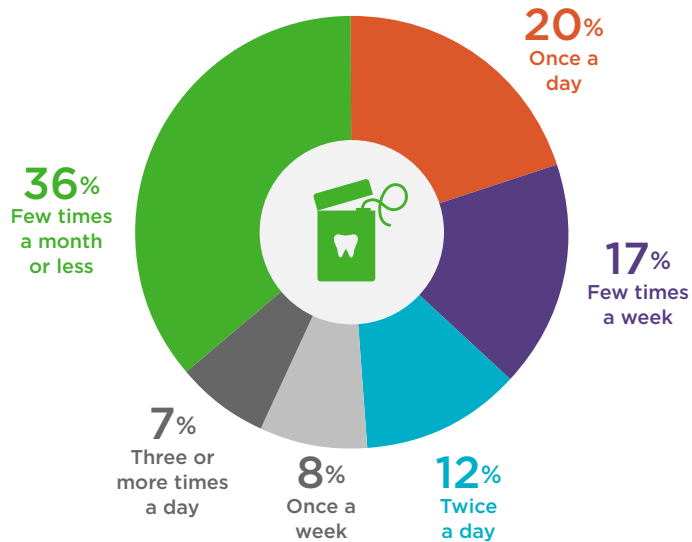


Some parents say their children's teeth **aren't brushed** in the morning (18%) or at bedtime (21%).

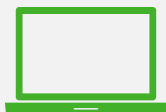
56%
Twice a day



Flossing



A majority (61%) of parents report that their children's teeth are flossed **less often than once a day.**



Looking for resources to teach your kids about oral health? Check out the SmileWay® Wellness website at mysmileway.com.

brushing up



Ever wonder what your dentist is really thinking? *Grin!* wanted to find out too, so we talked to Delta Dental network dentist Dr. Jeffrey A. Sherman of Oakdale Family and Cosmetic Dentistry in Oakdale, New York.

Do you have a favorite floss flavor?

Mint-flavored floss seems to mask the taste often associated with flossing.

Do you prefer an electric or manual toothbrush? I prefer an electric toothbrush.

When did you decide you wanted to be a dentist? I wanted to be a dentist because I love working with my hands and enjoy science. My personal dentist inspired me and was so excited when I selected dentistry as a career. I have been in practice since 1973. I love what I am doing and have no plans to retire from dentistry any time soon.

If you could tell patients to stop doing one thing, what would it be?

I tell patients to stop holding objects, like nails and sewing needles, with their teeth.

Any funny stories from the dental chair?

A woman was visiting from Florida and went swimming in the bay. A wave came along and dislodged her dentures, and when she surfaced, her teeth were gone! She came in and refused to leave without a set of teeth. I explained it would take several days to get them back from the lab. She looked at me sternly and said, "I am not leaving your office today without any teeth, so figure something out!" I constructed a denture with relined material and some spare denture teeth until the new ones arrived from the lab.

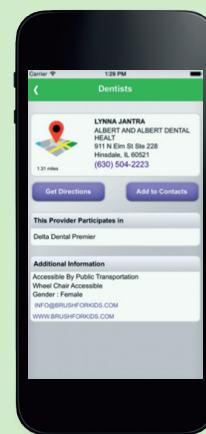


If you'd like to recommend your dentist for a *Brushing Up* interview, email grin@deltadental.com with his or her name and contact information.



dental benefits on the go

Logging in to Delta Dental's free mobile app provides quick and easy access to coverage information, recent claims and even your ID card. Looking for an in-network dentist? Our app can help. You can search for a dentist by network, dental specialty, location or a provider's last name. And by clicking on a dentist's name, you can view additional information, add the dentist to your contacts, and get directions to the dental office.



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