

# grin!®

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

winter  
2017-18  
volume 6, issue 4

5,000  
years of braces

Your guide to  
dental implants

5 resolutions to  
add to your list

The truth  
about xylitol

A young girl with dark hair is lying in bed, smiling warmly at the camera. She is holding a pink flashlight in her right hand, which is pointed towards the camera. She is also holding an open book in front of her. The bed is covered with a white sheet featuring a pink floral pattern. The background is dark, suggesting a nighttime setting.

*/ A smile can say*  
**IT'S TOO GOOD  
TO PUT DOWN**

**Every smile tells a story.** And each one can say something powerful. As the nation's leading dental benefits provider, Delta Dental makes it easy to protect your smile with the largest network of dentists nationwide, quick answers and personalized service. **Learn more at [deltadentalins.com](https://deltadentalins.com).**

 **DELTA DENTAL®**

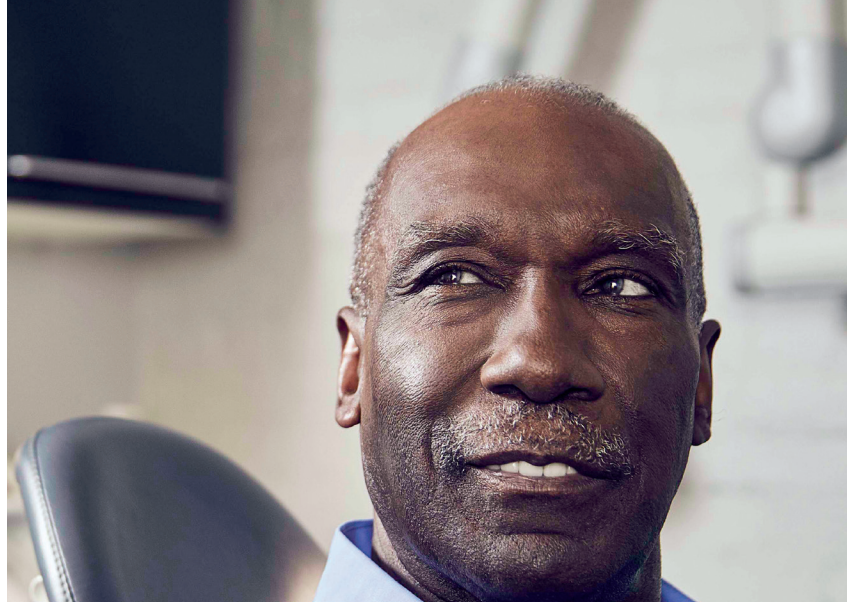
smile power™

# grin!

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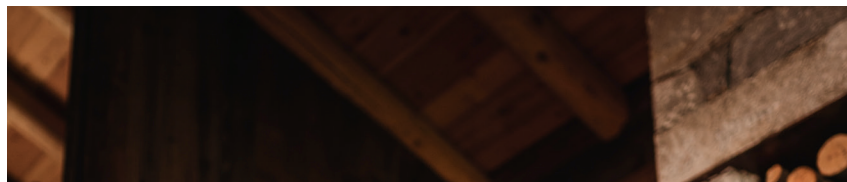
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## on topic with dr. kohn

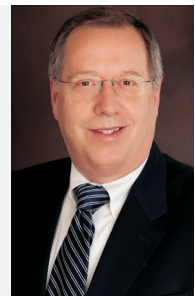
### seasonal depression and your oral health

Many people get depressed or anxious in the colder, darker months. If you suffer from the "winter blues," you may be experiencing seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Scientists think these feelings may be triggered by our bodies' responses to less sunlight. People with conditions such as depression or anxiety are subject to a greater number of risk factors for oral disease than those who don't have them, but there are steps you can take to lessen the effects of SAD and maintain good oral health during the cold, dark winter months:

- **Stay active.** Regular exercise has been proven to be effective against depression.
- **Experience as much daylight as you can.** Exposure to natural light will help boost your mood.
- **Eat plenty of fruits and veggies.** Winter blues can make you crave sugar and carbohydrates such as chocolate, breads and starchy comfort foods that are bad for your dental health.
- **Be conscientious about your oral health by brushing with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day and flossing once daily.** You're more likely to neglect brushing and flossing when you're feeling depressed.

It's normal to have some down days, but if these feelings continue for days at a time and you can't seem to find your usual level of energy or enjoyment in life, talk with your physician.

*Meet Bill Kohn, DDS, Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Policy. 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.*





mouth-  
friendly  
RECIPE

## chicken and wild rice soup

*This flavorful soup will warm you up and fill you up. If chicken soup is good for the soul, it's also good for your mouth, thanks to tooth-building calcium and phosphorus and gum-supporting vitamin C.*

### ingredients:

1 cup uncooked wild rice  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 cup chopped onion  
1 large carrot, peeled and chopped  
2 minced garlic cloves  
3 cups chicken broth  
1 ½ cups potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes  
3 cups milk  
½ cup all-purpose flour  
10 ounces shredded cheddar cheese  
2 cups cooked chicken, shredded  
¼ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon pepper

### directions:

- 1 Cook wild rice for 45 minutes to an hour, according to package directions. Set aside when ready — it should be chewy but tender.
- 2 Coat the bottom of a Dutch oven or large pot with olive oil, then sauté onion, carrot and garlic for 3 minutes over medium heat.
- 3 Add broth and potatoes and bring to a boil. Cook on medium to high heat for 10 minutes. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
- 4 Combine milk and flour in a bowl and whisk until well combined. Add the milk mixture to the soup and cook for 5 minutes or until slightly thick, stirring constantly.
- 5 Remove from heat and add cheese, stirring until it melts.
- 6 Add wild rice, chicken, salt and pepper; mix well. Enjoy!

# HISTORY OF ORAL HEALTH: the evolution of braces

Humans have long realized that proper alignment of teeth is an important part of oral health, but techniques for straightening teeth have changed dramatically.

## Egyptian mummies

have been found with gold bands around their teeth. Researchers think the bands were secured with cord made from animal intestines to act as orthodontic devices.



## Roman physician Aulus Cornelius Celsus

recommended that parents use their fingers to apply pressure to their children's teeth every day to ensure proper positioning.

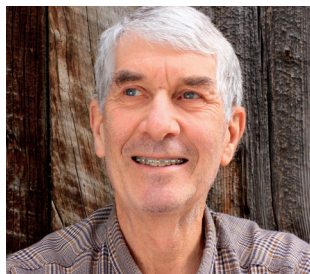
## King George III's personal dentist

wrote about the social and medical benefits of symmetrical teeth.



By the early 20th century, Edward Angle, known as “the father of orthodontics,” had patented 37 “tooth regulation” devices, including brackets, tubes, expanders and ligatures.

Today, more than 4 million children and adults in the U.S. have braces, according to the American Association of Orthodontists.





## readers ask, we answer

*Lexi asks:*

### **“My teeth hurt when it’s really cold out. Why does this happen?”**

Hi, Lexi. Did you know that your front teeth can change as much as 120 degrees in temperature? Exposure to cold air (and hot foods) can put a lot of pressure on your teeth. Just like other materials, your teeth expand and contract as they change in temperature. As the inside and outside of your teeth adjust, little cracks can emerge. These cracks usually don’t affect tooth structure, but they can be uncomfortable. And if you have amalgam fillings, the discomfort may be worse. Metal expands and contracts more easily than natural teeth do.

But that’s not the only reason your teeth can hurt in cold weather. If the enamel, or the outside layer of your teeth, has started to wear away, your teeth can become very sensitive. Without the protection of your enamel, the nerves inside your tooth are more exposed to the elements.

What can you do? First, talk to your dentist. A look inside your mouth — and possibly a new set of x-rays — can help your dentist figure out what’s causing the problem. In some cases, switching to sensitive toothpaste may be all you need. Or, your dentist may paint a protective varnish onto your teeth. In other cases, the pain may be a sign of something more serious. Cavities can increase sensitivity, especially if the infection has reached the pulp, the heart of your tooth. Your dentist may perform a pulp vitality test to check the health of your teeth. This test involves placing a hot or cold instrument on each tooth — or asking you to bite down — to see how your teeth respond to temperature changes and pressure.

In the meantime, you can reduce the pain by breathing through your nose when you’re outside and brushing and flossing regularly to fight decay. Avoid whitening treatments and acidic foods, which can increase sensitivity.

**Have a question you’d like us to answer? Send it to [grin@deltadental.com](mailto:grin@deltadental.com), and it could be featured in an upcoming issue.**

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# — 5 —

## ORAL HEALTH RESOLUTIONS

Many people make resolutions every New Year — but only 8% actually keep them. Be part of that elite group with these easy-to-keep resolutions that will help you smile all year long.

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### 1 FLOSS DAILY

Only 4 in 10 Americans floss daily and 20% never floss.<sup>1</sup> Flossing at least once a day is an essential part of oral health — it helps keep plaque at bay and can reduce your risk of gum disease.



### 2 BRUSH MORNING AND NIGHT

More than 30% of Americans skip nighttime brushing.<sup>1</sup> Brushing before bed helps remove a whole day's worth of food particles and bacteria. But when you go to bed without brushing, cavity-causing plaque can grow on your teeth all night long.



### 3 COMMIT TO TWO MINUTES

Your brushing sessions should last for two minutes to ensure you're reaching all the nooks and crannies in your mouth — but it can be surprisingly hard to guess how long that is if you're not looking at a clock. You can keep this resolution by trying the toothbrush timer on Delta Dental's free mobile app or using a simple stopwatch.



### 4 MAKE A DENTAL APPOINTMENT

Seeing a dentist regularly means that any oral health issues you may have can be identified early, saving you time and money in the long run. Plus, people who visit the dentist on a regular basis tend to have better oral health and better overall well-being, so it's well worth your time.



### 5 DRINK MORE WATER

Drinking water is just as beneficial for your mouth as it is for the rest of your body. Staying hydrated can prevent dry mouth and helps rinse food particles and bacteria away from teeth. Carrying a refillable water bottle is a convenient and eco-friendly way to stay well-watered — and if you fill it with tap water, you'll also benefit from a fluoride boost, in communities with fluoridation.

<sup>1</sup>Delta Dental Oral Health and Well-Being Survey (2014) by Delta Dental Plans Association. Survey of 1,003 adults.

*"A smile  
IS THE SAME AS  
sunshine:  
IT BANISHES WINTER FROM THE  
HUMAN COUNTENANCE."  
- VICTOR HUGO, LES MISÉRABLES*

## TWO-WORD answers

**Q:** Are smiles all the same?

**A:** They vary.

There are 19 types of smiles, including flirtatious, miserable, nervous and contemptuous, according to a typology developed by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco.





## all about **DENTAL IMPLANTS**

Replacements for natural teeth and roots, dental implants are a popular and permanent alternative to dentures and bridges. Here's how the process works.

### WHY IMPLANTS?

Implants can be used to replace one tooth or many teeth, or even to support a full denture. Implants are anchored into the jawbone, similar to the natural tooth root being replaced. Dentists can place the implant into the socket of the tooth they are extracting or surgically create a space for an implant if a tooth has been missing for some time.

Here are some of the advantages of implants:

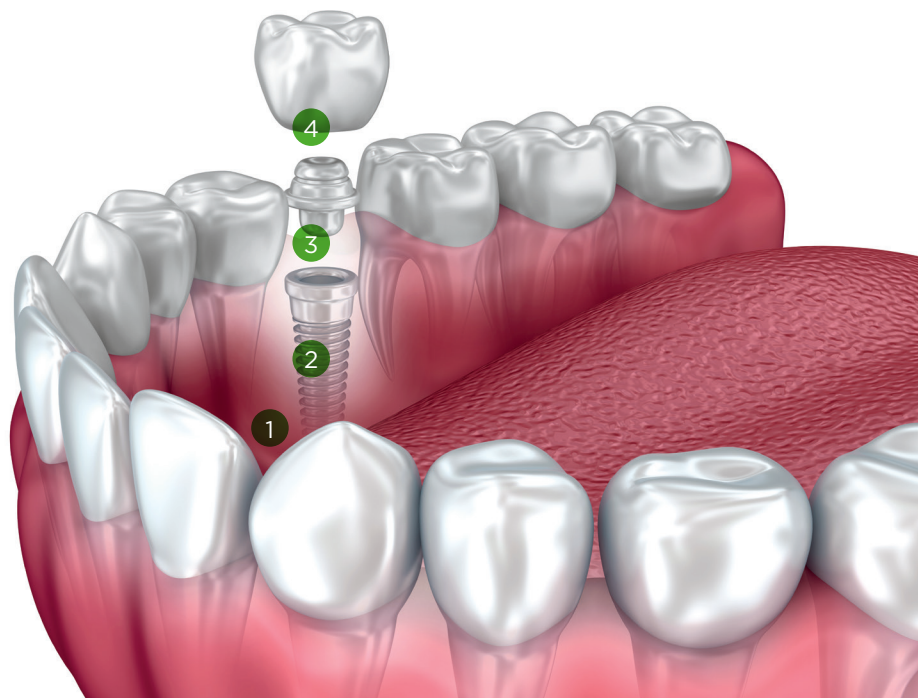
- Improve chewing and speech ability
- Restore natural appearance
- Permanent
- 85-90% effective
- Slow down bone loss

## HOW THEY WORK

It takes several sessions over the course of several months to install dental implants. The process may involve a number of dental professionals, such as an oral surgeon, periodontist, prosthodontist or general dentist with specific training in implants.

- 1 Your dentist will extract the unhealthy tooth.
- 2 After your gums heal and the bony socket fills in for 3–6 months, the dentist will do a second minor surgery. Your dentist will install the artificial root, made from titanium, into your jawbone. You will probably wear a temporary crown during this period.
- 3 Then, a tiny metal post known as an abutment or a connector is attached to the artificial root. This piece will attach to the crown (replacement tooth).
- 4 Finally, a crown is attached to the connector post.

This series of surgeries can take up to six months. If your tooth was extracted years ago, your dentist may first recommend a bone graft to replace receded bone.



## ARE IMPLANTS FOR YOU?

If you're in good health and have healthy gums and enough bone structure to support the implant, you may be a good candidate for dental implants. Your dentist will do an assessment to determine if implants are a fit for you.

To check if your plan covers implants, refer to your plan summary. Or, ask your dentist to submit a pre-treatment estimate. This free service from Delta Dental gives you an idea of how much implants may cost you.



'TIS THE SEASON  
TO BE  
*Healthy*

**6** holiday tips for teeth

The holidays are here! Stay smiling with these easy tips for healthy teeth.



1

Looking for stocking stuffers? There's no need to fall back on candy. Consider stocking up on novelty toothbrushes and floss. You can find brushes that light up, play a tune or tell you when they're too frayed to use. Or try unique floss flavors like strawberry, cupcake and bacon.



2

This winter, keep your kitchen stocked with seasonal favorites. In season from fall through winter, pomegranates, persimmons and grapefruits make refreshing snacks.



3

There's nothing like hot cocoa to make keep you warm through the winter holidays. You can enjoy the great taste without the sugar. Just swap out traditional sweeteners with some xylitol or erythritol. These sugar substitutes will keep your cocoa sweet, without promoting cavities.



4

Turning on a two-minute song is a fun way to make sure you brush long enough. During the holidays, switch it up with something a little more festive. Try short holiday tunes like "Jingle Bells" to keep you brushing and in the holiday spirit.



5

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 always looking for dental supplies. Or, check out the following organizations:

- [Donate a Toothbrush](#)
- [Global Dental Relief](#)
- [America's ToothFairy](#)



6

Advent calendars are a fun way to count down to Christmas, but 25 days of sweets can take a toll on your teeth. Replace candies with toys or trinkets such as erasers, crayons, plastic jewelry, stickers and temporary tattoos. Or, pick up a countdown calendar that comes with prepackaged toys.



## How your mental health affects your teeth

Feeling blue? Your teeth might not be doing so well, either. Recent research suggests that people with anxiety or depression may experience a decline in oral health. Understand the connection and learn what to do if it's happening to you.

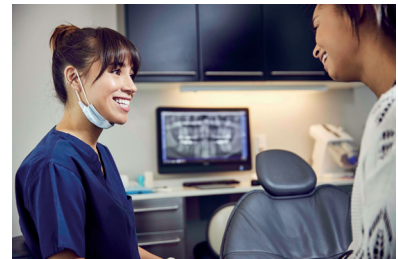
According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, almost two-thirds of people with depression reported having a toothache in the last year — significantly higher than the population on average. What's more, half of all people with depression rated their teeth condition as fair or poor. A scientific review of related studies found a strong link between gum disease and mood conditions like stress, distress, anxiety, depression and loneliness.

The most obvious explanation for the link comes from the behavioral effects of stress, depression and anxiety. When you suffer from these conditions, you might lose focus on oral health habits, which can lead to significant dental issues. If you're depressed, for example, you're more likely to brush and floss at irregular intervals, skip dentist visits, eat an unhealthy diet and smoke.

Biologically, depression and anxiety cause several factors that impact oral health. The stress they create manifests itself in the body as a hormone called cortisol. As cortisol levels increase, the immune system gets weaker. This can leave you vulnerable to mouth conditions like gum inflammation (gingivitis) and gum disease (periodontitis). In addition, medications prescribed for depression and anxiety can cause dry mouth. This lack of saliva can mean that food debris, plaque and bacteria aren't getting rinsed from teeth easily, which can make it easier for cavities to form.

Anxiety, in particular, tends to be associated with several oral health issues. If you have anxiety, you're more susceptible to canker sores, dry mouth and teeth grinding (bruxism). As with depression, these issues may be attributed to a lack of oral care or as side effects of anxiety medication.

Luckily, when depression or anxiety takes a toll on oral health, there are ways to fight back. The simplest step you can take to maintain your oral health is to brush twice a day and floss daily. Set a timer to remind you to brush and floss, and make an appointment with your dentist. He or she may recommend a nightguard to stop grinding, or prescription fluoride toothpaste for cavity prevention. And consider talking to your doctor or therapist about how stress reduction techniques or cognitive behavioral therapy can offer relief.



Your dentist can help you deal with the oral health effects of depression and anxiety. Take a moment during your next dentist visit to explain your symptoms and discuss any medications you're taking.



# DENTAL TREND SPOTLIGHT

## xylitol

*Found in chewing gum, candies and even jams, xylitol is a popular sugar substitute. Here's a closer look at this low-glycemic sweetener.*

### WHAT IS IT?

Xylitol is a naturally occurring sugar that can be found in fruits, vegetables and grains like raspberries, mushrooms, corn and oats. It's typically extracted from birch trees or corn.

When xylitol is extracted from plants, it can be used as an artificial sweetener with some pretty sweet benefits. It's safe for people with diabetes, contains about one-third of the caloric content of sugar and doesn't cause tooth decay. In fact there's evidence to suggest it can actually prevent cavities.

### IS IT EFFECTIVE?

Xylitol has been shown to effectively prevent cavities when added to chewing gum, toothpaste and other oral care products. But there's a caveat: It takes about 20 grams of xylitol a day to see these effects, which is about 20 sticks of gum. That's a lot more than the small, naturally occurring amount found in food.

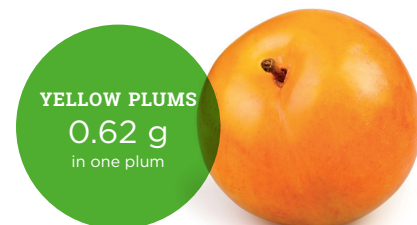
### IS IT SAFE TO USE?

You can safely consume up to 50 grams of xylitol a day. More than that, however, can cause diarrhea and intestinal gas. Because long-term effects aren't clear, you should avoid xylitol if you're pregnant or breastfeeding.

However, xylitol can be fatal to dogs, even in small amounts. If your dog swallows any products containing xylitol, call your vet immediately.

**THE VERDICT:** In safe doses, foods containing xylitol are a great way to cut back on the amount of sugar in your diet and may even help prevent cavities. But it's definitely not a replacement for regular brushing and flossing.

### AVERAGE AMOUNT OF XYLITOL FOUND IN 1 SERVING OF . . .



## your winter *smile* list

*These 10 wintry to-do's are sure to make you grin!*

- 1 Cook a healthy homemade soup. (Check out the recipe on page 5.)
- 2 Take a tour of your town's best holiday lights.
- 3 Do a random act of kindness.
- 4 Declare a pajama day — stay in and stay cozy!
- 5 Organize a movie marathon.
- 6 Read a book you've been meaning to finish this year.
- 7 Bundle up and go for a chilly stroll.
- 8 Invite friends over for board game night.
- 9 Invest in a comfy pair of slippers.
- 10 Enjoy a cup of sugar-free hot cocoa — and spice it up with some fresh mint!

