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winter 2018-19

Why your
genetics may
increase your
cavity risk

To wet or not to wet:
the toothbrush
dilemma

3

ways oral health influences your

relationships

Is juicing hurting
your smile?

in this issue of

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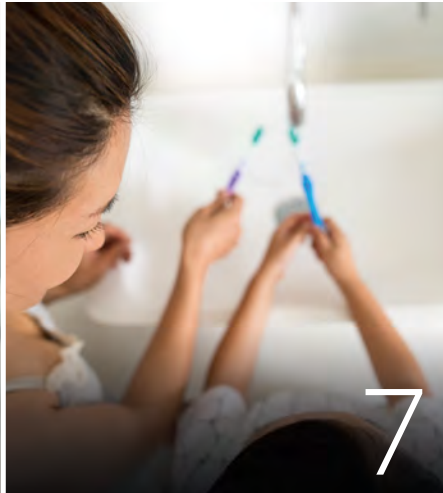
Looking to boost your relationships?

Your oral health may be a good place to start! Explore three unexpected ways a healthy grin impacts your social life.

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On topic with Dr. Dill

Don't forget your smile during retirement

One of the great things about retirement is having more time to do what you enjoy. But something you should never retire is your oral health care routine. In fact, it's best to make oral health a priority in retirement, because some issues become more prevalent with age.

Take a look at some of the common problems you can run into:

- **Periodontal disease**, or gum disease, is a major cause of tooth loss in older adults.
- **Diabetes** is a growing problem among older people, and if you have diabetes, you may be more susceptible to periodontal disease.
- Older adults are more likely to have **systemic illnesses** in general, and as a result may take medications that cause **dry mouth**. Over time, dry mouth can lead to increased **cavities** and **mouth infections**.
- Age also increases your risk of developing **oral cancer**.

Fortunately, gum disease, tooth decay and oral cancer are largely preventable. Spend time each day taking care of your oral and overall health by practicing good oral hygiene at home, avoiding tobacco and eating a healthy diet.

That's not all. Regular dental visits are also essential for keeping your mouth healthy. If you're in the habit of waiting to go to the dentist until you have a problem, rethink your strategy. Preventive care is relatively low-cost and can identify problems early before they require costly treatment. Keeping up with routine cleanings and exams is one of the best ways to control costs. To learn how to manage oral health expenses, check out our article on page 17 about [dental benefits in retirement](#).



Meet Joseph Dill, DDS, Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Network Strategy. With over 30 years of experience in the dental field, including eight in private practice and 16 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

More than ever, older adults are keeping most of their teeth for a lifetime.
By taking the right steps, you can, too!

Mouth-friendly recipe: Marbled chocolate bark with almonds

This irresistible mix of flavors offers a sweet start to the new year. Creamy white chocolate is swirled into rich dark chocolate and scattered with almonds for added crunch. Need another reason to indulge? Despite the sugar content, chocolate is a safer choice for your teeth than other candies, because it dissolves quickly.

Ingredients:

10 ounces dark chocolate
4 ounces white chocolate
¼ cup slivered or sliced almonds

Directions:

- ① Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- ② Coarsely chop the dark chocolate and white chocolate into pieces, keeping them in separate piles.
- ③ Use a double boiler to melt the dark chocolate. If you don't have a double boiler, you can set a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of gently simmering water. Be careful the bowl doesn't touch the water.
- ④ Once two-thirds of the dark chocolate has melted, remove the saucepan or bowl from heat. Stir the chocolate mixture until completely melted.
- ⑤ Repeat the melting process for the white chocolate, using a clean inner saucepan or bowl.
- ⑥ Use a spatula to spread the dark chocolate onto the parchment paper.
- ⑦ Drop spoonfuls of white chocolate randomly over the dark chocolate, and use the tip of a knife to swirl them together.
- ⑧ Scatter almonds across the chocolate mixture.
- ⑨ Place the baking tray in the fridge.

Wait for the chocolate to harden, about an hour. When ready, break the chocolate into pieces, and enjoy!

History of oral health: Dental insurance

Did you know that dental insurance has only been around for several decades? Here's a quick look at the surprising history of this industry and how it's transformed dentistry since the 1950s.

Early 20th century: Life before dental insurance

In the first half of the 20th century, there was no such thing as dental insurance. Various types of medical insurance had been around since 1850, but they didn't cover dentistry.

That meant patients paid the full cost of dental services out of pocket. As a result, people tended to only visit the dentist when something was wrong — like a head-splitting toothache — instead of getting regular cleanings and exams.

1960s: Dental coverage spreads across the country

Nearly 7,000 dentists joined the California Dental Service network by 1963. The organization covered almost 235,000 people. Back then, enrollees' claim histories were recorded manually on cards!

As the demand for dental coverage grew, the American Dental Association recommended having a national agency to coordinate coverage across different states. In 1966, Delta Dental Plans Association was formed under the name National Association of Dental Service Plans.

The following year, Delta Dental of Washington partnered with the International Association of Machinists to provide the first dental benefits plan across state lines.



1960s

Early
20th
century

1950s

1960s

Today



1950s

1950s: The first dental plans emerge

What's on your wish list for job perks? In 1954, for the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and the Pacific Maritime Association (ILWU-PMA), it was dental benefits. ILWU-PMA, the group representing these workers, presented the idea of dental coverage for employees' children, along with \$750,000, to the dental associations in California, Oregon and Washington.

Soon after, the first three dental benefits organization were formed. The Washington Dental Service was founded in 1954 and the Oregon Dental Service and the California Dental Association Service in 1955.

By 1957, nearly 2,000 children were covered by California Dental Association Service, which later developed into Delta Dental of California.

Today: Most Americans enjoy dental coverage

Today, about 77% of Americans have dental insurance, according to 2017 enrollment statistics from the National Association of Dental Plans. That includes nearly 90% of children. With dental insurance, you have access to low-cost preventive care. That means you're more likely to visit the dentist frequently and less likely to suffer from cavities and gum disease.

In 2019, Delta Dental companies cover more Americans than any other dental carrier. Over 78 million people are covered by Delta Dental plans across all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Readers ask, we answer

Olive asks:
“Should
I wet my
toothbrush
before
I brush?”

Hi, Olive. Not necessarily.

This question sparked an intense debate online. You might’ve noticed the consensus focused on only two toothbrush-wetting approaches, but there are actually three: wet the brush before, wet the brush after or don’t wet the brush at all (radical, we know).

The thing is, each style has valid benefits:

- **Wetting before** softens toothbrush bristles and rinses off debris.
- **Wetting after** ensures the toothpaste melts into your toothbrush so it doesn’t roll off.
- **Not wetting your toothbrush** means there aren’t extra steps between applying toothpaste and brushing.

But there is no overwhelming advantage to any of these approaches. Rather, to achieve optimum oral health, adopt consistent brushing habits and use an effective brushing technique.

Dentists recommend brushing twice a day for two minutes, spending 30 seconds on each quadrant. But it’s easy to rush through it — in fact, the average adult only spends 45 seconds brushing — so consider using a timer to keep you on track.

Unlike toothbrush-wetting, brushing technique actually matters! To effectively remove plaque, apply toothpaste, wet at your discretion and hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to gums, gently brushing inner and outer teeth surfaces.

Plaque, however, accumulates beyond tooth surfaces. It also builds up between teeth and along the gumline, leading to cavities and gum disease. So, make flossing a part of your daily oral health routine too.

For strong, healthy teeth, your wetting preference really doesn’t matter. Rather, the key is keeping up with your daily brushing and flossing.

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

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3

ways oral health can affect your

relationships

Whether it's a personal or professional relationship, your smile, and the way you treat it, can make a major impact. (Spoiler alert — taking good care of your teeth and gums can give relationships of all types a boost!) Check out some of the unexpected ways oral health influences your social life.



1

Increasing confidence at work

Want your coworkers to see you as a confident, reliable partner? Take a deep breath, stand tall and crack a smile. More than half of Americans say that good oral health makes them feel confident, according to the 2017 Delta Dental Plans Association (DDPA) Adult Oral Health & Well-Being Survey. For many, oral health ranks higher than clear skin and being in shape when it comes to feeling confident.




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2 Leaving a great first impression

When you meet someone for the first time, your smile could be the secret to starting off on the right foot. In fact, 65% of adults from the DDPA survey consider a person's smile to be one of the most significant things they remember from a first impression. Not only do the majority of Americans surveyed claim to be more attracted to people who smile often, but more than half also believe that people who smile are more successful.

3 Maintaining healthy relationships

It's not just *that* you brush — it's also *how* you brush. No matter who you share a bathroom with, respecting each other's space is key, especially when it comes to toothbrushes. Adults feel that someone using their toothbrush without asking is one of the top reasons to end a relationship, according to the DDPA survey. Besides offending your roommate or partner, sharing a toothbrush is a surefire way to pass germs like staph and E. coli along with germs that cause cavities. If you're really in a pinch, using your finger or a clean washcloth is a safer bet.



You might not think about it often, but how you treat your teeth can make a difference in all kinds of relationships. If you're not happy with your dental health, it's not too late — schedule a dental appointment today. And remember, for healthy teeth, brush with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day for two minutes at a time and floss at least once daily.

2-word answers



Q:

Is eggnog bad for your teeth?

A:

It depends.

For many, eggnog is a tradition as synonymous with winter as chilly temps. However, those prized family eggnog recipes may contain high levels of sugar, which can be harmful for your teeth.

Did you know one serving of traditional eggnog has roughly 20 grams of sugar? That may not sound like a lot, but the American Heart Association recommended daily limit is just 37.5 grams for men and 25 grams for women. All that sugar can stick to teeth to create acids that cause tooth decay. If you add alcohol to the mix, your mouth can become dry, making that sugar even stickier.

Don't worry, this doesn't have to mean swearing off eggnog for good. With these simple adjustments, you and your teeth can continue to enjoy an occasional glass:

- Swap out your typical recipe for a sugar- and alcohol-free alternative. Try boosting flavor with spices like nutmeg, cloves or ginger!
- Alternate sips of eggnog with water to help remove sugar from teeth.
- Enjoy eggnog with a meal instead of as a stand-alone treat. Eating helps wash away the sugar.
- After indulging in eggnog, brush your teeth for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste, or chew sugar-free gum if you're unable to brush.

You could also try a different winter beverage. Consider infusing hot tea with cinnamon sticks. Certain types, like green tea, may even contain antioxidants that benefit gums!

Why you may have a higher cavity risk

Your smile is as unique as you are. Yet, there's one thing our mouths have in common — most of them face tooth decay. In fact, more than 90% of Americans have a cavity at some point in their lifetime, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). While it's impossible to predict exactly who will get cavities, certain genetic and lifestyle factors can increase your susceptibility.

Genetic cravings

Most people know sugar is a primary culprit in the formation of cavities. But did you know that genetics can also influence the strength of your sweet tooth? A recent [study published in *Cell Metabolism*](#) suggests that the desire to seek out sweet treats is actually woven into your DNA.

Here's the good news — there are plenty of [healthy alternatives to satisfy your sugar cravings](#) without risking cavities.



Tooth shape

The shape of your teeth can increase your risk for cavities. If your teeth have large valleys, you might want to consider sealants, which can seal off biting surfaces from cavity-causing bacteria. Be sure to check if sealants are covered under your dental plan, and if there are age limitations, before seeking treatment.

Enamel strength

Depending on your genetic makeup, your enamel may be naturally harder or softer than average. Tooth enamel protects the inner layers of teeth from decay. The softer your enamel, the more easily acids from plaque can attack and break down tooth enamel, which over time, can reach the inner layers of the tooth.

Deep crevices and pits in the top surface of your teeth make you especially vulnerable to decay.



Saliva makeup

Saliva may be the unsung hero of cavity prevention. The chemical makeup of your saliva can help with remineralization — the process that keeps your teeth from developing cavities. And, producing less saliva can make you more cavity prone. The amount of saliva you have is influenced by a host of lifestyle factors such as snoring, diet and medication.

The effects of saliva don't stop there. The genetic makeup of your saliva may even help reduce specific types of bacteria that cause cavities, according to an article in the *International Journal of Contemporary Dental and Medical Reviews*.

While these factors may influence your cavity risk, no matter who you are, healthy oral habits and regular dental visits are key to stopping cavities. And most dental plans cover regular preventive checkups at little to no cost, so there's no reason not to go!

Your winter smile list

Brighten up your spirits with these lively winter activities.

- ① Build a snowman, and give him a giant grin! Can't find any snow? Try making a [foaming snowman](#) out of baking soda. This fun, indoor experiment lets you watch the snowman "melt."
- ② Stop by your neighbors' with a tasty treat to spread good cheer.
- ③ Create a winter playlist with your favorite seasonal tracks.
- ④ Stay toasty with a hot yoga class. Don't forget to drink water!
- ⑤ Teach yourself a new trick. Learn how to yo-yo, juggle or pull cards out of thin air.
- ⑥ Make your own candy! Check out the recipe for [homemade chocolate bark](#) on page 5.
- ⑦ Visit an indoor botanical garden to enjoy some vibrant blooms.
- ⑧ Surprise a friend with an old-fashioned letter, written by hand.
- ⑨ Get out your crafts supplies and make a scrapbook.
- ⑩ Invite a friend to go ice skating.



Dental trend spotlight:

Juice cleanses

Are juice cleanses a quick way to lose weight... and erode enamel?

Planning on slimming down after the holidays with a juice cleanse? If only it were that simple.

If you've never heard of a juice cleanse, think of it as a juice fast. Rather than eating solid food, during a cleanse you only drink juiced fruits and vegetables.

Cold-pressed juice cleanses have gained popularity because of claims they detoxify and slim down the body, increase energy levels and produce a healthy glow. And being purely natural, fruit juice boasts a serious roster of nutrients, minerals and vitamins.

Liquify your fruits and get a better body — sounds like a great tradeoff. But does juicing have unforeseen risks?

Do juice cleanses = weight loss?

Juice cleanses sound easy enough: Erase all that indulgent holiday eating by drinking only juice for a week. But anyone who's done a juice cleanse will tell you they're not quite that easy or satisfying. Since juices have fewer calories than a typical meal, giving up solid foods means your caloric intake will significantly decrease. But when you return to your normal diet, be prepared to see those pounds reappear.

Can juicing affect oral health?

Fruit juices contain high levels of natural sugars that, in large, sustained quantities, damage teeth. But it's not just the sugar that's harmful. Rather, it's the oral bacteria that feed on sugar and produce acid that erodes teeth and leads to cavities.

Juice nestles into vulnerable grooves in the mouth, particularly at the gumline and in between teeth. When bacteria and acid accumulate here, it can cause gum irritation and even gum disease.

Plus, during a cleanse you not only give up solid foods, you also give up chewing, which is a saliva-producing function that washes food particles off teeth, out of the mouth and down the esophagus. In the absence of chewing, sugars, as well as citric acid, stay on teeth, triggering enamel erosion and tooth sensitivity.

So, if you're going to juice, here's how to protect your teeth:

- **Don't sip juice, drink it.** Drinking juice limits prolonged exposure to juice sugars.
- **Use a straw.** Straws reduce teeth's contact with juice.
- **Drink water.** After consuming juice, wash away fruit sugars with H₂O.
- **Brush teeth.** Give your teeth about an hour to recover from juice acids before brushing.
- **Eat whole fruits.** The fiber in fruits stimulates saliva production to help clean teeth.

Does juicing supercharge or subdue?

Due to high sugar levels and insufficient calories, fiber and protein, juice cleanses may lead to nutrient and electrolyte imbalance. Just like when you're hungry, cleansing provokes issues such as fatigue, headaches, dehydration, blood sugar fluctuations and an inability to concentrate. Also, large amounts of fruit juices can disrupt the digestive process and cause diarrhea, prompting the body to lose the very nutrients it needs to function properly.

How to detoxify the right way

Even though advocates of juice cleanses swear they feel healthier, lighter and detoxified from juice cleanses, these claims are unproven. There's no scientific data suggesting juice cleanses are a valid method of detoxification, according to the [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health](#). Furthermore, unpasteurized juices may actually introduce new bacteria.

So, if juice cleanses don't detoxify you of holiday cookies, what will?

The truth is the body doesn't need help detoxifying. In fact, through basic regulatory processes of the liver, kidney and colon, your body is constantly detoxifying itself.

Recover from the holidays by eating everything

Well, not everything. But to guarantee you feel great, look beautiful and slim down after the holidays, consistently eat a well-balanced diet. It's the best way to ensure your liver, kidney and colon are in fighting shape to naturally detoxify your body.

The verdict: For the sake of your health and your smile, rethink juice cleanses. Instead, eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables in their natural form. And if you must, opt for an occasional cold-pressed juice as a meal supplement, not a replacement.

Retiring soon? Don't leave dental coverage behind

When retirement is on the horizon, it can be easy for oral health to fall off the radar. Whether you plan to spend your retirement traveling the world or simply starting a new hobby at home, proper dental care and coverage are important for a healthy future. Here are some ways to prepare your smile for this new lifestyle.

Get the facts

As with every stage of life, you face a unique set of oral health changes as you grow older. These can include an increase in cavities, dry mouth, receding gums and more, making it especially important to stay vigilant about maintaining a healthy smile. In fact, tooth decay is the most prevalent chronic disease among those 65 and older, according to the [National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research](#).

Be proactive

Preventive care is essential for keeping teeth strong and functional. Regular checkups and cleanings can help you avoid cavities and gum disease or catch these issues early, before they become costly.

Unfortunately, many older adults don't keep regular appointments. More than 35% of adults over 65 did not visit the dentist in 2016, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). This may be because many Americans with coverage through their employer lose these benefits when they retire. Plus, many Medicare plans don't cover dental care.

Know your coverage options

While you can pay out of pocket for dental expenses, you have coverage options that can help protect your smile and wallet for years to come. Delta Dental offers a wide variety of individual plans to fit your needs. Visit our website to [shop for plans](#) and [get a quote](#). You may also be eligible for a Delta Dental affiliate plan. From membership plans to federal dental programs for military retirees and veterans, [find the full list](#) on our website.

By taking time to consider dental coverage now, you can focus on all the benefits retirement has to offer without letting oral health issues interrupt your plans.

5 surprising dental stats

Preventive dental care in America is at an all-time high, but that doesn't mean we're doing our best at keeping mouths healthy. Discover if you also overlook these aspects of oral health.

40%

of children younger than 3 years old have never been to the dentist.

Because baby teeth fall out, many people mistakenly believe they're unimportant. But healthy baby teeth are critical for smiling, speaking and chewing. They also hold space in the jaw for adult teeth to grow underneath gums.

Long before permanent teeth erupt, children should visit a pediatric dentist. Children should see a dentist when the first tooth appears, or no later than a child's first birthday, according to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Biannual dental checkups for young ones build a strong oral health foundation and reduce the risk of future dental problems.

Among children, sports activities are responsible for 13% of overall oral trauma, according to the Journal of the American Dental Association. Yet, mouthguards are severely underused. Properly fitted mouthguards can reduce or eliminate dental injuries. They protect jaws from fracture and teeth, lips, cheeks and other soft tissues from trauma. With the risk of dental injury especially high in contact sports like football, basketball, soccer and hockey, athletes young and old should wear mouthguards before they play.

only 60%

of children playing contact sports wear mouthguards.

Brushing your teeth twice a day for two minutes is the first line of defense against bad breath, tooth decay and gum disease. Only brushing once a day gives harmful bacteria and plaque free rein to flourish.

Sticky plaque that's not removed eventually hardens into tartar, a rough barnacle-like substance that, once formed, makes it difficult to clean teeth properly. When tartar obstructs brushing, your risk of tooth decay and other health problems increases.

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3 out of 4
millennials only
brush their teeth
once a day.

42%
of adults visit the
dentist less than
once every year.

While it's critical to brush twice a day, there are some tasks that are impossible for a toothbrush. For example, tartar, the rough hard substance that develops from unremoved plaque, can only be removed with a dentist's tools. Because tartar causes cavities and gum diseases, regular dental visits are a critical component in protecting teeth. Dentists can also prevent and detect oral health issues early so you avoid complications down the road.

The key to keeping your smile looking and feeling great throughout your life is vigilant preventive care. This starts at home with brushing for two minutes twice a day, flossing once a day and eating a healthy, balanced diet. And of course, visiting your dentist regularly.

48%
of adults are
concerned about
not having an
attractive smile as
they get older.

A photograph of a baby wearing a dark blue knit hat and a matching coat with a striped scarf, smiling broadly. The baby is being held by an adult whose hand and a portion of a light blue patterned hat are visible. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees.

JY

NOTHING
SPREADS IT
QUITE LIKE
A SMILE.



smile power™

Smiles are such simple gestures, yet they're so powerful. That's why Delta Dental protects more smiles than anyone. As the nation's leading dental insurance carrier, we make it easy to keep your smile healthy with specialized expertise and the largest network of dentists. **Start protecting your smile today by choosing your plan at deltadentalins.com.**