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● spring 2019

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What to know
before you go

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Will there ever be a
cavity vaccine?

**Prep your mouth for
public speaking**

4 ways to keep
flossing

in this issue of

grin!



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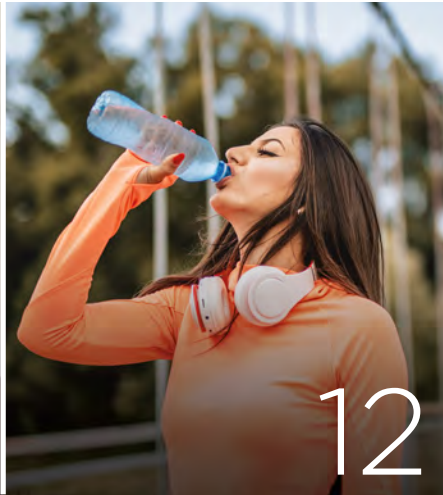
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Caring for baby's smile

Your baby doesn't need a mouthful of teeth before you start thinking about oral health. See how you can start protecting baby's smile even before that first tooth arrives.

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History of oral health: Teeth embellishment

You might think “bling” is a recent fashion craze, but it turns out that even ancient cultures were fascinated with bedazzling their teeth. Cosmetic dentistry has a long and surprising history — check it out!

1800 B.C. to A.D. 250

Some of the first teeth embellishers were Mayan dentists, who decorated teeth with jade, turquoise, gold and hematite. This process involved first drilling holes into the teeth and then using adhesives like plant sap to attach the jewels.



250 to 1870

In a custom known as “ohaguro,” aristocratic Japanese dyed their teeth black when they reached puberty, as a symbol of health, beauty and status. Made by dissolving iron filings in vinegar, the inky substance was also believed to preserve teeth, protecting them from yellowing and decay. While the practice was popularized during the eighth through 12th centuries, it was later banned in 1870 by the Meiji government.



1178

When Chinese explorers in the Philippine mountains wrote of their encounter with a “fierce tribe with gold-pegged teeth,” they unknowingly created the earliest written record of cosmetic dentistry. Archeological evidence suggests that these “gold-pegged teeth” were achieved by hammering gold plates into the mouth. Sometimes gold was even adhered by drilling holes into teeth. What we do for beauty!



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1401 to 1500

Unearthed skulls from the Ming Dynasty reveal that the Chinese of this era enhanced their teeth with intricate fish scale patterns made of gold.



Today

Teeth embellishments run the gamut from grills and tooth jewelry to tooth tattoos.

Despite their enduring popularity, tooth embellishments often lead to painful and costly oral health complications. So, consider prioritizing your oral health by admiring embellishments of ancient civilizations at museums, rather than in your own mouth. ■



On topic with Dr. Dill

Is dental decoration worth it?

Your teeth, gums and oral tissue are designed by nature to fit your unique smile. While it may be tempting to try embellishing your mouth or teeth with tattoos, jewelry or grills, these changes can upset the natural balance of your mouth. How?

Ouch! Mouth piercings, unnecessary drilling or adding grills could damage your smile by:

- Chipping or breaking your teeth
- Cracking your crowns
- Making deep cuts in the soft tissue of your gums and mouth
- Creating traps for bacteria
- Increasing the chance of infection

This possible damage, along with the potential for gum disease and bad breath, means it's probably best to let your natural smile speak for itself.

It's true that ancient populations viewed dying and drilling their teeth as a symbol of beauty and status. However, dental science has come a long way since then. Today, we're able to avoid many of the oral health problems people experienced in years past.

So, skip the teeth embellishments and avoid unnecessary pain, complications and costs. If you really want to make your smile shine, keep it healthy! Brush your teeth twice each day, floss daily and remember to visit your dentist for regular checkups. ■



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.

Mouth-friendly recipe: Refreshing blackberry-mint infused water

Water can get boring, making it tempting to reach for sugary, high-calorie drinks. Instead, try this trick: Infuse your water with fresh fruits. Surprising and slightly sweet flavors, like this recipe using blackberry and mint, will give you the flavors you crave and keep you hydrated.

Ingredients:

A handful of blackberries (use more if you'd like!)
4 to 5 mint leaves
Water

Directions:


- ① Mash the blackberries using your hands, a muddler or a spoon. Add the juices to a pitcher.
- ② Rub the mint leaves in your hands to release the oils. Place them in the same pitcher.
- ③ Add 3 to 4 cups of water to the pitcher. Let the water, blackberry juice and mint infuse (a.k.a. sit and rest) for at least two hours.
- ④ For full flavor, leave it in the fridge overnight.
- ⑤ Give the water a good stir. Add more blackberries or mint to taste.
- ⑥ Enjoy! ■

Mint

Did you know...? Mint may be best known for improving bad breath, but it also improves brain function and digestion!

Blackberries

The antioxidants found in blackberries not only protect the body, but their antibacterial properties can also kill bacteria in your mouth.



Readers ask, we answer

Bryan asks:
**“Is it normal to
 have dry mouth
 before public
 speaking?”**

Hi, Bryan! Don't worry — it's common to experience dry mouth before presenting, especially if you're nervous or anxious.

Dry mouth is a natural part of the body's “fight-or-flight” survival response to stressful situations. Public speaking happens to be a common stress trigger for many people. On top of creating that annoying dry sensation often characterized as “cotton mouth”, your stress hormones produce physiological changes that can include a pounding heart, quickened breath, tense muscles and beads of sweat.

If you face dry mouth on a regular basis, it's best to talk to a dentist or medical professional. He or she may be able to find an underlying cause or recommend medications or products to help. Beyond making you feel uncomfortable, chronic dry mouth can increase the likelihood of cavities, gum disease, oral infections and bad breath.

Here's the good news — there are plenty of ways you can help keep your mouth moist the next time you step up to the podium:

- Keep a water bottle within reach during your presentation.
- Before you start, chew sugar-free gum to create more moisture.
- Avoid tobacco, caffeine, acidic drinks and alcohol, which can worsen dry mouth.
- Check with your dentist, who may be able to recommend solutions specific to your needs.
- Calm your presentation jitters by taking deep breaths, practicing your speech and preparing the room to make sure everything is set up correctly. ■

4 strategies to start — and keep — flossing regularly

You know you should do it every day. Your dentist keeps telling you flossing is important. And you've heard it before: Flossing is one of the best ways to reduce your chance of gum disease and prevent those hard-to-drill cavities that can form between teeth. But it's so easy to end the day without picking up the floss.

No longer. Here are four tips to help you finally incorporate this essential step into your daily routine.

1

Choose the perfect floss.

If you want to floss regularly, it helps to enjoy it. What better way than to use the right floss? Head to your local drugstore and try a new type of floss.

Maybe you appreciate a silky waxed thread that glides smoothly between your teeth. Or perhaps flavored gum is more your style: the sweet taste of bubblegum — or bacon. Always have trouble reaching those back molars? A pre-threaded flosser may be just what you need. Whatever it is, stock up on the type of floss that makes flossing less painful for you.

Once you get into the swing of things, you may start loving that minty clean — or bacon-y — feeling between your teeth.

2

Store your floss in plain sight.

Out of sight, out of mind. Keep your dental floss in your line of vision so you don't have any excuse to forget it. Place it on your bathroom counter, by your sink or next to your toothbrush.



3


Designate floss time.

To make flossing feel routine, devote a specific time of day to flossing. It might be before bed, after brushing your teeth. It could be right after you wake up in the mornings. Or maybe your lunch break at work. Whatever time you choose, make sure it's one that fits your schedule, and stick to it.

4

Keep extra floss handy.

When you get into the habit of flossing regularly, your floss may start running out sooner. Don't let that be an excuse for skipping a day or two. Buy floss in bulk, and keep extras lying around. Toss some floss into your backpack, briefcase or purse. Keep some at your desk at work. Wherever you are, your floss should be within reach.

A man with short brown hair and a beard is smiling while flossing his teeth. He is wearing a light blue polo shirt. The background is a bright, modern interior with wooden beams and a large window.

Did you know?
When you floss regularly, your gums are less likely to bleed, according to a [Cochrane study review](#) in 2011.

NOW THAT YOU'RE FLOSSING REGULARLY, HERE'S HOW TO MAKE IT REALLY COUNT.

1. Use about 18 to 24 inches of floss.
2. Wrap the ends around your index and middle fingers.
3. Slip the floss between your teeth, and gently slide it down each tooth in a "C" shape. Avoid sawing motions, which can hurt your gums.
4. Use a clean section of floss each time to avoid spreading bits of food and bacteria.
5. Be thorough. Don't leave a single tooth unflossed! Surprisingly enough, that includes your very back teeth. Flossing behind your back molars can help remove plaque from between the tooth and gums. ■

2-word answers



Q:

Will there ever be a vaccine for cavities?

A:

It's possible.

Cavities are creeps. They lurk around, settling into the grooves of your mouth, only to be discovered by your disappointed dentist. It's no wonder you're asking about vaccines — cavities can make you feel helpless!

But the good news is that scientists at the Chinese Academy of Sciences have been working on a vaccine that could potentially lower your risk of cavities.

Here's how it would work:

- Similar to a flu shot, a cavity vaccine would blend proteins with *Streptococcus mutans* (S. mutans), which is the cavity-causing bacteria.
- Once received, the vaccine would boost your body's resistance to S. mutans, so that over time, it could no longer cause tooth decay.

In a 2012 [cavity vaccine](#) study published in the *Journal of Dental Research*, scientists found that their fusion protein vaccine produced unwanted inflammation. But later versions of the vaccine showed more promising results:

Over 50% of the rats and mice with cavities showed signs of healing.

Among those without cavities, 64.2% had cavities prevented.

Tooth decay does more than diminish oral health. Cavities can lead to gingivitis and gum disease, both of which have been linked to [heart disease](#), [diabetes](#) and even [dementia](#). But even though a cavity vaccine could improve lives and smiles around the world, the science is still in the discovery phase.

So, as of today, much more testing and research are needed before you can schedule an appointment with your dentist for the vaccine. In the meantime, the best way to ward off cavities is to take care of your smile. Simply brushing twice a day and flossing daily can protect your teeth from harmful bacteria creeping in. And twice a year, be sure to visit your dentist so you can keep track of bacterial developments and better manage your oral health. ■

Why water is good for dental health

Water. It nourishes plants, ocean life and even the cells in your body. But did you know that it's also essential to your dental health? Take a minute to find out the four ways water helps your teeth and gums.

1. Rinse away harmful bacteria

Drinking water after eating can help cleanse your palate, teeth and breath, especially when you can't sneak away to brush. Food leaves behind remnants that break down into cavity-causing acids.

Want to stop this process in its tracks? Keep a glass of water handy to follow up your meal. Water helps wash away those bits of food and bacteria before they can wreak havoc in your mouth. What's more, it dilutes the acidity in your mouth.



2. Strengthen enamel

Did you know that the surface of your teeth is the hardest substance in the human body? Harder than even bone, enamel is 96% mineral. But if you don't watch out, acidic foods and drinks can quickly soften this important defense. To protect your teeth against tooth decay, choose fluoridated tap water. In a process called remineralization, fluoride helps harden your enamel, making it more difficult for cavities to form. If your local water supply isn't fluoridated, talk to your dentist about fluoride supplements.



3. Fight dry mouth

Dry mouth is not only uncomfortable, it also raises your risk of gum disease and decay. Saliva helps wash away harmful bacteria and acids. Keep a water bottle nearby and sip throughout the day to keep your mouth moist.

4. Keep you hydrated

Other drinks just don't compare. Water is the best way to hydrate. Without any dehydrating additives, water quickly quenches your thirst for a healthy mouth and body. Looking for a new spin on an old favorite? Add a touch of blackberry and mint to your water. Check out p. 6 for the recipe.

Did you know...? The average adult needs anywhere from eight to 13 cups of water every day. ■

Your spring smile list



Get your
spring on
with these
fun activities.

- ① Reconnect with nature by planting your state's official flower in your backyard or by decorating your home with fresh-cut flowers.
- ② Take a walk and enjoy the fresh spring scents.
- ③ Spring clean your smile by replacing toothbrushes that are more than four months old.
- ④ Unplug your earbuds, throw open the windows and listen to the birds chirping.
- ⑤ Get a smile on your face and your heart rate hopping by jumping on a trampoline.
- ⑥ Spice up your routine by working out while you brush. For exercise ideas, check out [our list](#) on page 18.
- ⑦ Unlock your inner child by swinging in your neighborhood park.
- ⑧ Pick a beautiful day to visit the petting zoo with your family.
- ⑨ Sip on refreshing fruit-infused water at a picnic with friends. Check out the [perfect recipe](#) on page 6.
- ⑩ Spread smiles by texting thoughtful compliments to friends and family. ■



Dental trend spotlight: Dental tourism

Tempted to take your teeth abroad for dental care? Get the facts first.

Nearly half of people going abroad for medical reasons are seeking dental treatment, according to [Patients Beyond Borders](#). In fact, more than 6 million people from around the globe — including 800,000 Americans — crossed a border to get dental work done in 2017, [Patients Beyond Borders](#) estimates. With some dental clinics abroad promising savings of up to almost 80% on costly procedures like root canals, implants and crowns, it's no wonder so many people are interested.

Where do people go?

Where people go for dental care abroad is often driven by where in the U.S. they live. Residents of Arizona, California and Texas are likely to travel to Mexico. Those living on the East Coast commonly head south to Costa Rica. Other popular dental destinations include Hungary, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Poland, Spain, Thailand, Turkey and Vietnam, according to [Patients Beyond Borders](#).

Is it safe?

If you're considering going abroad for dental care, be sure to research the safety and quality of an overseas dentist before making the trip. Read reviews from previous international patients to help paint an accurate picture. While Delta Dental network dentists go through a strict credentialing process that ensures quality care, some clinics abroad may be less reputable.

And remember, dental tourism isn't for everyone. Dental treatment abroad may not be a great idea if you're prone to asthma attacks, or more susceptible to infection because of heart disease, kidney failure or a transplant.

Is it covered by dental insurance? What about follow-up care?

Before planning a trip overseas, it's crucial to check your dental coverage to see if services outside of the U.S. are covered and what documentation is needed. Certain plan types with closed networks may not cover international dental care at all.

If something goes wrong after you've returned from receiving dental care abroad, you may need a follow-up visit — with either a local dentist or potentially back abroad. Keep in mind that some U.S. dentists will not provide follow-up care on dental work done abroad because of liability risks.

The verdict: If you're considering dental tourism, keep your regular dentist informed of any dental work you're planning abroad. If you choose to travel overseas for dental work, research the quality of that dentist thoroughly and know the costs up front. ■



Do babies need dental coverage?

Your new baby has finally arrived. You've stocked up on baby clothes, installed an infant car seat and added your little one to your medical coverage. But have you thought about dental insurance? Dental coverage is an important way to protect your baby's health. If dental coverage isn't on your new baby checklist, here are three reasons to consider it.

1. Get the dental care your baby needs

Did you know that your baby should visit the dentist? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends booking an appointment by your child's first birthday — or first tooth, whichever comes first.

Your child's dentist will check your baby's gums, teeth and bite to make sure everything is in order. He or she can spot early signs of cavities, gum inflammation and misaligned teeth. Your child's dentist may recommend preventive services, like cleanings or fluoride treatments. A dental visit also lets you ask questions about your baby's teeth and get advice on brushing and flossing.

2. Avoid infant tooth decay

Babies can develop cavities before they can even walk. Teeth usually come in around six months, but they can emerge as early as three months. As soon as your baby has at least one tooth, you and your child's dentist will want to watch out for cavities. Tooth decay is a serious disease that can cause

infection in other parts of the body. What's more, children who have had tooth decay are more likely to have dental problems as teenagers and adults.

When you prevent (or catch) cavities early on, you help ensure a life of healthy smiles for your child.

3. Save on dental costs

When your baby is covered under your dental plan, you won't have to pay for dental visits out of pocket. Most plans cover exams, cleanings and other diagnostic or preventive services at 100%. Your plan may also cover restorative treatments.

How do I sign my baby up for dental coverage?

Good news: Having a baby counts as a qualifying life event, which means you can make changes to your benefits. Just choose family coverage and list your baby as a dependent. If you have any questions about your plan, reach out to your benefits administrator, broker or Delta Dental's Customer Service.

Not covered? You can [sign up](#) for a Delta Dental plan that meets your family's needs.

When you opt for infant dental coverage, you invest in a lifetime of healthy smiles. ■

5

exercises to boost your brushing routine

If April showers bring May flowers, then spring workouts bring summer fitness, right? Get your body and your smile in shape by incorporating these simple exercises into your brushing routine. Be sure to start small, so you're still able to get in the full two minutes of thorough brushing twice each day.

1. Use the wall.

Try a wall sit, which works both your quads and your core. Extra points if you can hold it for the full two minutes!

**2. Step up.**

Want to tone your lower body? Walk around while you brush to get your daily steps in. Too easy? Challenge a housemate to a brushing step-off!

3. Get on your tiptoes.

Build your calf muscles by standing on your tiptoes and raising your calves. See if you can complete more raises each time you brush.



Remember, if you try these exercises while you're brushing, make sure that you are still (safely) giving your teeth the attention they deserve. Continue to brush for the full two minutes with fluoride toothpaste twice a day. Brush at a 45-degree angle and give attention to all surfaces of your teeth.

4. Lift and repeat.

Sit down with your legs in front of you and your back straight. Lift and lower your legs, each time contracting your core to work your abs. Try it with your legs straight or knees bent. (Hint: Whether you sit on your bed, a chair or the floor, find a place where you're able to balance well enough to brush too!)

5. Squeeze your knees.

Want to strengthen your thighs? Sit on a flat surface like the floor or your bed. Place a small, inflatable ball or a rolled-up bath towel between your knees. Slowly squeeze your knees, contracting your inner thighs. Release slightly, keeping some tension on the ball or towel and repeat. ■

A man and a woman are laughing together in a park. The man, in the foreground, is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and has his head tilted back, laughing heartily. The woman, partially visible on the right, is also laughing and has her hand on the man's shoulder. The background is a soft-focus view of trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves.

YOU

A SMILE SHOWS
THE WORLD
WHO YOU ARE.



smile power™

Smiles are such simple gestures, yet they're so powerful. And if you're retiring, they're easy to keep healthy in the next chapter of your life. As the nation's leading dental insurance carrier, Delta Dental protects more smiles than anyone. Visit deltadentalins.com to choose a plan today!