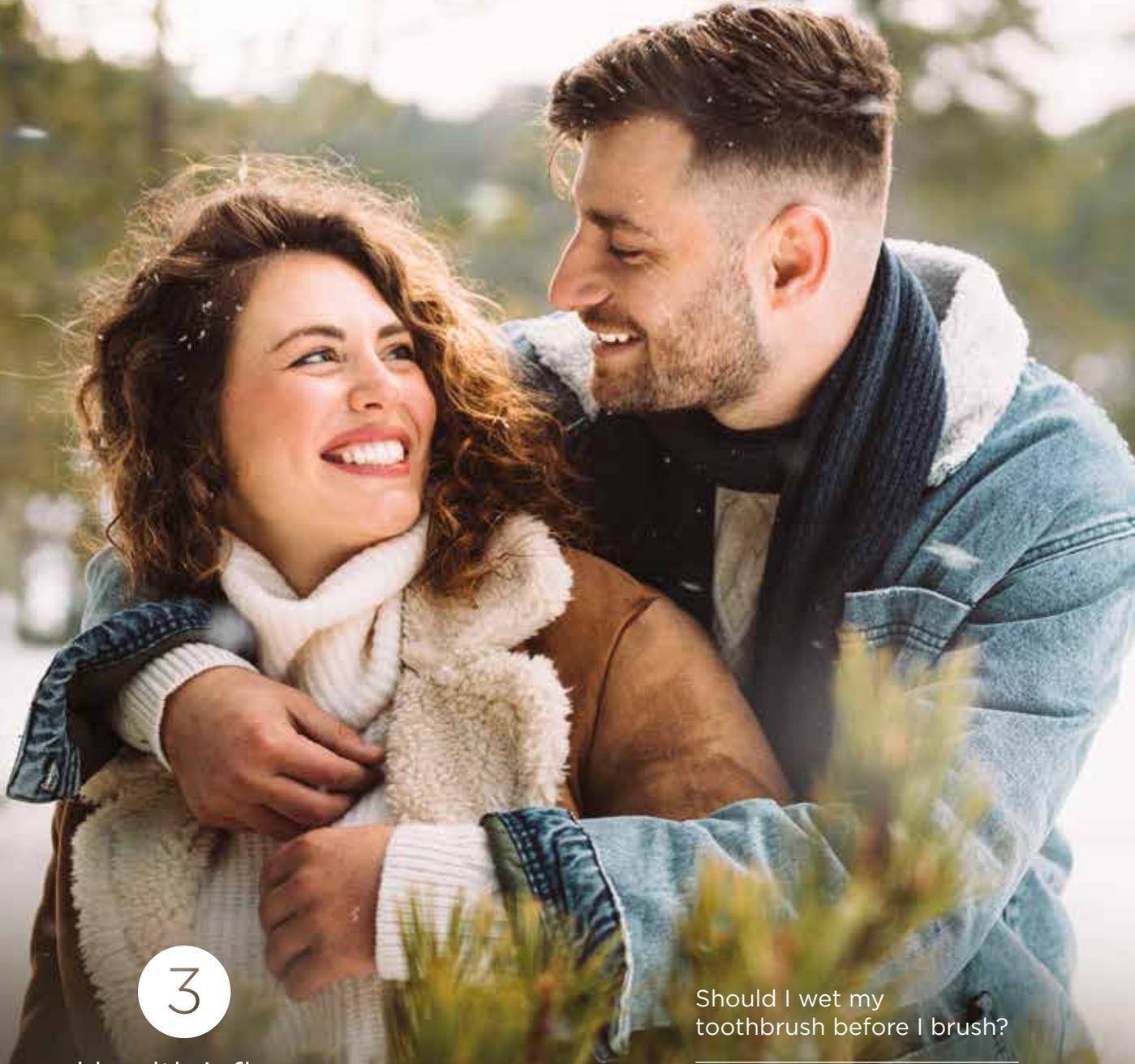


# grin!®



3

ways oral health influences your

*relationships*

Should I wet my toothbrush before I brush?

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Are you prone to cavities?

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Dental trend spotlight:  
Juice cleanses

in this issue of  
**grin!**

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WELLNESS



The connection between asthma and oral health

If you're dealing with asthma attacks, your inhaler may be causing trouble for your teeth. Find out what signs to watch for so you can breathe easy.

LIFESTYLE



Recipe for sugarless eggnog

Keep your holiday eggnog sugar-free so you stay cavity-free. We're sharing a simple recipe that makes this seasonal staple smile-friendly.

Access the digital version anytime, anywhere at [grinmag.com](http://grinmag.com).



## 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 the things 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 those with diabetes may be more susceptible to periodontal disease.
- **Older adults have more systemic illnesses in general**, and as a result, often take medications that cause dry mouth. Over time, dry mouth can lead to increased cavities and mouth infections.
- Age also increases the **risk of developing oral cancer**.

Fortunately, gum disease, tooth decay and oral cancer are largely preventable. One of the best things you can do is 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.

Additionally, regular dental visits are 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 help manage oral health expenses, check out our article on page 17 about dental benefits in retirement.

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



Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Network Strategy, Joseph Dill, DDS. 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: Swirled chocolate bark with almonds

Most people celebrate the holidays by indulging in a few sweets. But that doesn't have to mean cavities in the new year. If you're looking to splurge, choose chocolate! It's less likely to stick to your teeth than other candies. This recipe for dark chocolate bark not only minimizes your teeth's exposure to sugar, but it can also boost your mood. Dig in when you're craving sweets or just feeling the winter blues.

#### Ingredients:

10 ounces dark chocolate, coarsely chopped  
4 ounces white chocolate, coarsely chopped  
¼ cup almonds, whole or chopped

#### Directions:

- 1 Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 2 Heat the dark chocolate in a double boiler or a bowl set over a saucepan of gently simmering water; do not allow the bowl to touch the water.
- 3 When dark chocolate is two-thirds melted, remove from heat and stir until completely melted.
- 4 Repeat melting process for the white chocolate.
- 5 Spread dark chocolate onto baking sheet.
- 6 Drop spoonfuls of white chocolate randomly over the dark chocolate and use the tip of a knife to swirl them together.
- 7 Scatter almonds over the swirled chocolate.
- 8 Refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.
- 9 Break into pieces and enjoy.

## History of oral health: The evolution of dental coverage

Dental coverage has changed the way we take care of our mouths, and Delta Dental is proud to play a part as the nation's leading provider of dental benefits. Take a look at how it's evolved in the U.S. since its origins in the 1950s.

Before dental plans became available, patients paid their full bill out of pocket for every service received. As a result, they tended to only visit the dentist when something was wrong instead of seeking preventive care.

Dentists and employers noticed a need for better access to oral health care and preventive care in particular. **This drove the formation of the first dental service organizations in California, Oregon and Washington.**

Pre-1954

1954

1966

Today

As the popularity of dental coverage spread, multiple dental organizations came together. **In 1966, they formed Delta Dental Plans Association** to help companies provide high-quality dental benefits, especially companies operating in multiple states. The following year, Delta Dental of Washington partnered with the International Association of Machinists to provide the first multi-state dental benefits program.

Today, Delta Dental Plans Association provides coverage to more Americans than any other dental benefits company. With a network of 39 independent Delta Dental companies, we help keep smiles healthy in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. **Those with coverage are more likely to visit the dentist, schedule appointments for their children and experience greater oral and overall health.**

## Readers ask, we answer

*Olive asks:*  
"Should I wet my toothbrush before I brush?"

Hi, Olive. You might have seen a flood of Twitter chatter sparked by a tweet reading, "Do ya'll wet the toothbrush first, or put toothpaste on first?" The response online was mixed, but our answer is pretty simple: Wetting your toothbrush is more a matter of preference and doesn't significantly change the success of brushing.

Supporters of wetting your toothbrush first say there are multiple advantages of this approach. For example, it softens the bristles, making the brushing experience more comfortable. It also allows the toothpaste to stick to your toothbrush more effectively and rinses off any debris that came into contact with your toothbrush since the last time you brushed.

While these benefits might matter to some, it's much more important to practice proper brushing habits. Make sure to brush twice a day for two minutes at a time using fluoride toothpaste. You should also replace your toothbrush every three to four months and rinse it after each use. When it comes to storing your toothbrush, stand it upright versus laying it on its side and prevent it from touching other toothbrushes.

Whether you wet your toothbrush or not, you can keep your pearly whites squeaky clean by maintaining the right brushing routine.

grin!

3

ways oral health influences your

# relationships



LIFESTYLE

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Whether you're grinning in a meeting or just relaxing with friends, a healthy smile can make a difference. 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.



LIFESTYLE

**1 Building confidence**  
Need a confidence boost for an upcoming presentation or annual review? Take a deep breath, stand tall and crack a smile. The majority of Americans say that good oral health makes them feel confident. If you aren't super confident with your oral health, schedule a dental appointment. Those who visit the dentist at least once a year are more likely to like their smile than those who don't.

Dentists remove harmful substances you can't get rid of at home to prevent cavities and bad breath.

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For healthy teeth, brush twice a day for two minutes at a time with fluoride toothpaste and floss at least once a day.



## ② Leaving an impression

When you meet someone for the first time, your smile could be the secret to starting off on the right foot. Sixty-five percent of adults consider a person's smile one of the most significant things they remember from a first impression. To create an image of success during that first meeting, try smiling more. Those who smile a lot tend to come off as more successful.

## ③ Cohabiting

Let's talk about sharing a bathroom. Adults report that someone using their toothbrush without asking is one of the top reasons to end a relationship. Besides just seeming icky, 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 washcloth is better than nothing.



You might not think about it often, but how you treat your teeth is tied to how happy you are with relationships of all kinds. Adults who are committed to taking care of their smiles are more likely to say their relationships are "excellent." Practice good oral health and you'll always have something to smile about.

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## Two-word answers



**Q:**  
Is eggnog bad for your teeth?

**A:**  
Yes, typically.

Eggnog is a delicious holiday staple for many people, but it usually contains high levels of sugar. One serving of traditional eggnog has roughly 20 grams of sugar, while the recommended daily limit is 37.5 grams for men and 25 grams for women. All that sugar can stick on teeth to create acids that cause tooth decay. Plus, eggnog is sometimes made with alcohol, which can decrease saliva flow and increase your risk for tooth decay.

To prevent eggnog from damaging your teeth, consider these mouth-friendly tips:

- Swap out your typical recipe for a sugar-free alternative.
- Alternate with glasses of water to help remove sugar from teeth.
- If you can't resist, drink eggnog with a meal instead of as a stand-alone treat. The increased saliva flow from eating a meal will wash away some of the sugar.
- After indulging in eggnog, brush your teeth for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste or chew sugar-free gum if you aren't able to brush right away.
- Choose a different delicious beverage to stay in the holiday spirit. Options include sugar-free hot chocolate and hot tea. Some variations, like green tea, may even contain antioxidants that benefit your gums.

With a couple of adjustments to your routine, you can enjoy this festive drink while keeping your teeth jolly all season long.

# Are you prone to cavities?

Mouths vary significantly from person to person, but one thing's for sure: Most of us will deal with tooth decay. In fact, 97 percent of the population will experience a cavity over the course of their lifetime. Read on to learn some of the genetic and lifestyle factors that make certain people more susceptible to cavities.

## Sweet tooth

Most people know sugar is a primary culprit for the formation of cavities. But did you know that how often you expose your teeth to sugar is more important than how much sugar you eat? The strength of your sweet tooth and how frequently you crave sweets are influenced by genetics. That means the desire to seek out treats might be woven into your DNA.

## Tooth structure

The shape of your teeth influences your risk for cavities. Deeper crevices and pits in the top surface of teeth make people especially vulnerable to decay. If your teeth have large valleys, you might want to consider sealants. These are plastic coatings used to seal off biting surfaces from cavity-causing bacteria. Make sure to check with your dental coverage provider to find out if sealants are covered under your plan.

Another genetic factor is enamel strength. Tooth enamel works to protect the inner layers of teeth from decay. Depending on your genetic makeup, your enamel may be naturally harder or softer than average. The softer your enamel, the more easily it can break down to form cavities.

Plaque is a sticky layer of bacteria that forms on your teeth. Cavities develop when plaque produces acids that attack and demineralize tooth enamel. With enough exposure, those acids can dissolve the enamel, reaching and decaying inner layers of the tooth.

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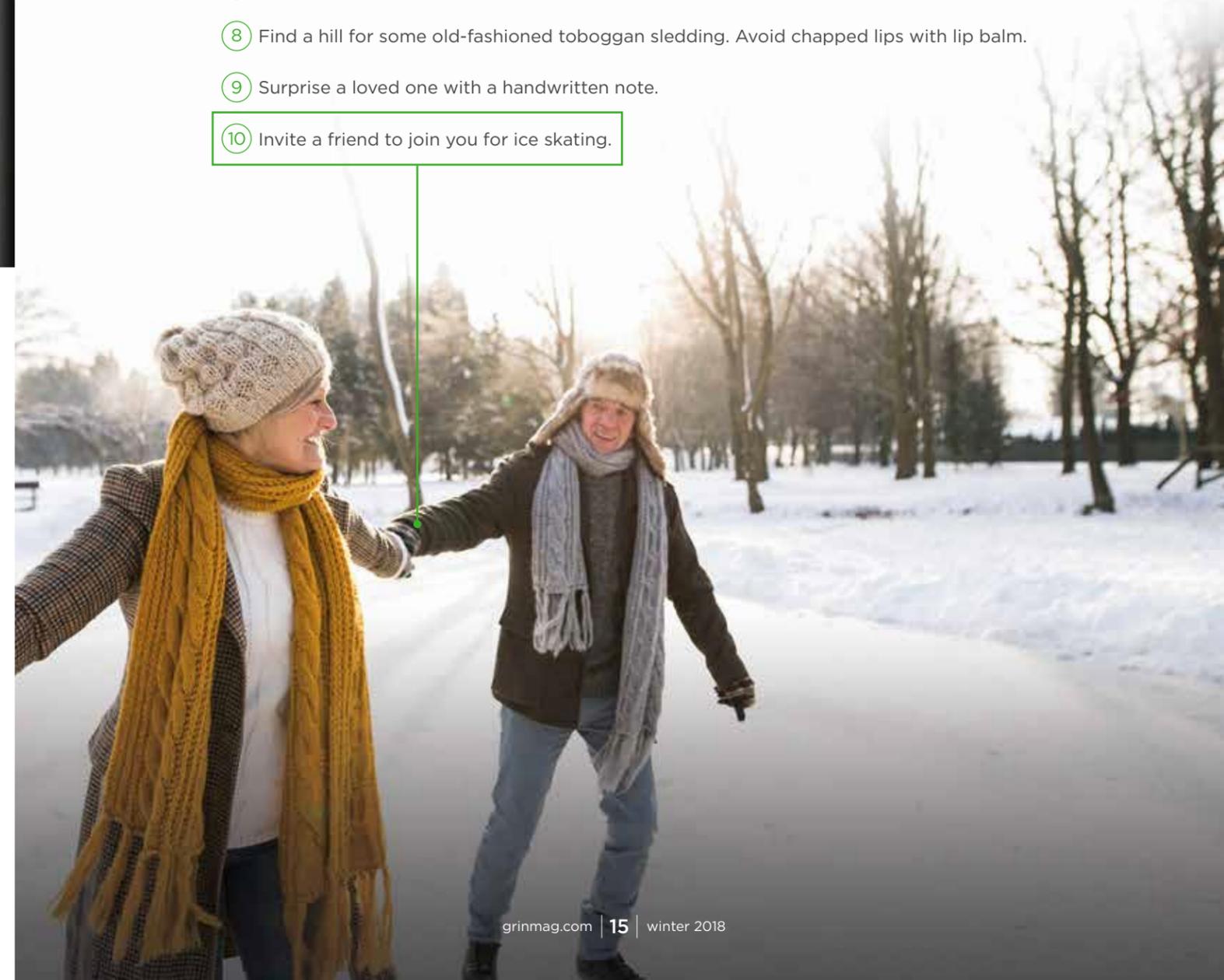


grin!

## Your winter smile list

Take some time to spread smiles with these fun winter activities!

- ① Build a snowman and give him a giant grin!
- ② Make your neighbors a treat to share holiday cheer (see our recipe on page 5).
- ③ Create a winter playlist with songs that make you feel festive.
- ④ Do a hot yoga class while the weather's chilly. Be sure to stay hydrated with water!
- ⑤ Teach yourself a new trick like how to yo-yo or juggle.
- ⑥ Snap a couple pics of yourself and a friend smiling in the snow.
- ⑦ Visit an indoor botanical garden to enjoy a little greenery.
- ⑧ Find a hill for some old-fashioned toboggan sledding. Avoid chapped lips with lip balm.
- ⑨ Surprise a loved one with a handwritten note.
- ⑩ Invite a friend to join you for ice skating.



### Saliva

The minerals in your saliva and the amount of saliva help with remineralization – the process that keeps your teeth from developing cavities. Having less saliva can make you more prone to cavities. The amount of saliva you have is influenced by a host of factors such as snoring, diet and medication.

In addition, the composition of your saliva plays a part. The genetic makeup of your saliva may help reduce specific types of bacteria that cause cavities, according to research from the University of Pittsburgh.

No matter who you are or what your background, proper oral health 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!



## Dental trend spotlight: Juice cleanses

Are you considering detoxing with a juice cleanse after all those holiday sweets? If you are, you might want to think twice before starting.

The idea behind a juice cleanse is that you collect toxins like chemicals and bacteria from the food and drinks you consume along with the air you breathe. This buildup is thought to cause health issues such as headaches, asthma, arthritis and more. Juice cleanses temporarily replace regular diets with fruit and veggie juices with the intention of flushing out toxins. Advocates claim they help organs remove toxins more quickly. They point to benefits such as increased energy, reduced appetite, rehydration and weight loss.

Many health experts, though, aren't convinced. The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health says there's no data to suggest cleanses remove toxins or improve health.

In fact, because they eliminate key nutrients, juice cleanses actually cause issues such as blood sugar fluctuations, inability to concentrate, low blood pressure and fatigue, among others.

When it comes to oral health, juice cleanses do more harm than good. While fruits have nutritional benefits, they also contain a high level of natural sugars. During a cleanse, all that sugar can damage teeth. By drinking juice throughout the day, you increase your mouth's exposure. And because you aren't eating solid foods, sugar isn't being washed away by regular chewing. Further, cleanses with citrus fruits are acidic and can erode enamel and increase tooth sensitivity.

**Our verdict:** For the sake of your smile (not to mention your health), say no to juice cleanses. We recommend eating a well-balanced diet to keep your wellness in check.



## Don't retire your dental coverage

When retirement is on the horizon and you're itching to enjoy it, make sure to keep oral health top of mind. Don't let your new lifestyle cause you to overlook the importance of proper dental care and dental coverage.

As with every stage of life, older adults face a unique set of oral health changes. 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.

**Tooth decay** is the most prevalent chronic disease among those 65 and older.

Preventive care is essential for keeping teeth strong and functional. Regular checkups and cleanings are some of the best ways to avoid cavities and gum disease or to catch them early before they require costly treatments.

Unfortunately, many older adults don't keep regular appointments. This may be due to the fact that many Americans lose their benefits when they retire if they previously had coverage through their employer. Plus, many Medicare plans don't cover dental care.

**40%** of retirees report not visiting the dentist within the previous year.<sup>1</sup>

While you can pay out of pocket for dental expenses, you also have several coverage options to keep you smiling for years to come. Most Delta Dental companies offer plans designed for individuals, and [deltadental.com](http://deltadental.com) makes it easy to find coverage. With these plans, you'll receive the same high-quality dental coverage you would have from an employer along with access to the largest network of dentists nationwide. Depending on where you live, you may also be able to obtain dental coverage through Medicaid or Medicare Advantage plans.

In some states, retirees without coverage can take advantage of a dental discount program called Delta Dental Patient Direct®.\* This program allows patients to visit participating dentists who have agreed to discounted fees. Patients then pay for dental services out of pocket at their appointments.

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.

<sup>1</sup>According to a study reported by CNBC in 2016, *Oral Health America 2015 Public Opinion Poll*

\*States with Delta Dental Patient Direct include Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma and Washington.

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# 5 surprising dental stats

All across America, people have greater access to preventive dental care than they did 50 years ago, but the numbers suggest we could be doing more to keep our mouths healthy. Take a look at these surprising stats to discover what oral health areas might benefit from a bit more attention.

Brushing with fluoride toothpaste twice a day for two minutes is essential for preventing tooth decay and gum disease. If you brush only once a day, you expose your teeth to harmful bacteria for longer periods, increasing your risk of cavities. Plus, you don't get the chance to remove plaque buildup, giving it a higher likelihood of turning into tartar.



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



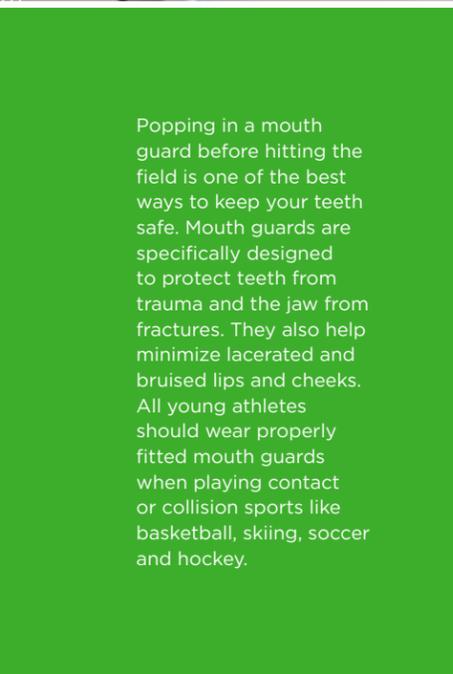
40% of children younger than 3 have never been to the dentist.

Taking your little one to the dentist puts your child on the right track for a strong and healthy smile. Babies should see the dentist within six months of their first tooth and no later than their first birthday, according to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. This early visit sets the foundation for good oral health so your child can avoid problems such as cavities down the road.



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

Only your dentist or dental hygienist can remove tartar buildup. Because tartar causes cavities and gum disease, protecting your teeth and gums requires regular dental visits. Dentists also play a key role in preventing oral health issues or spotting them early so you avoid more complicated issues later.



Popping in a mouth guard before hitting the field is one of the best ways to keep your teeth safe. Mouth guards are specifically designed to protect teeth from trauma and the jaw from fractures. They also help minimize lacerated and bruised lips and cheeks. All young athletes should wear properly fitted mouth guards when playing contact or collision sports like basketball, skiing, soccer and hockey.

only 60% of children playing fall and winter sports wear mouth guards.

It's easy to keep your smile looking good and feeling great throughout your entire life. The key is staying vigilant about preventive care. Always remember to brush twice a day for two minutes, floss once a day, eat a healthy diet and visit the dentist regularly.



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



# JY

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SPREADS IT  
QUITE LIKE  
A SMILE.

 DELTA DENTAL®

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 provider, 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 [DeltaDental.com](https://www.DeltaDental.com).**