

grin!

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

fall
2014
volume 3, issue 2

stamp out
e-cigarettes

5 myths
about
braces

fall into good
oral health habits

how to spot
and treat
children's mouth
conditions

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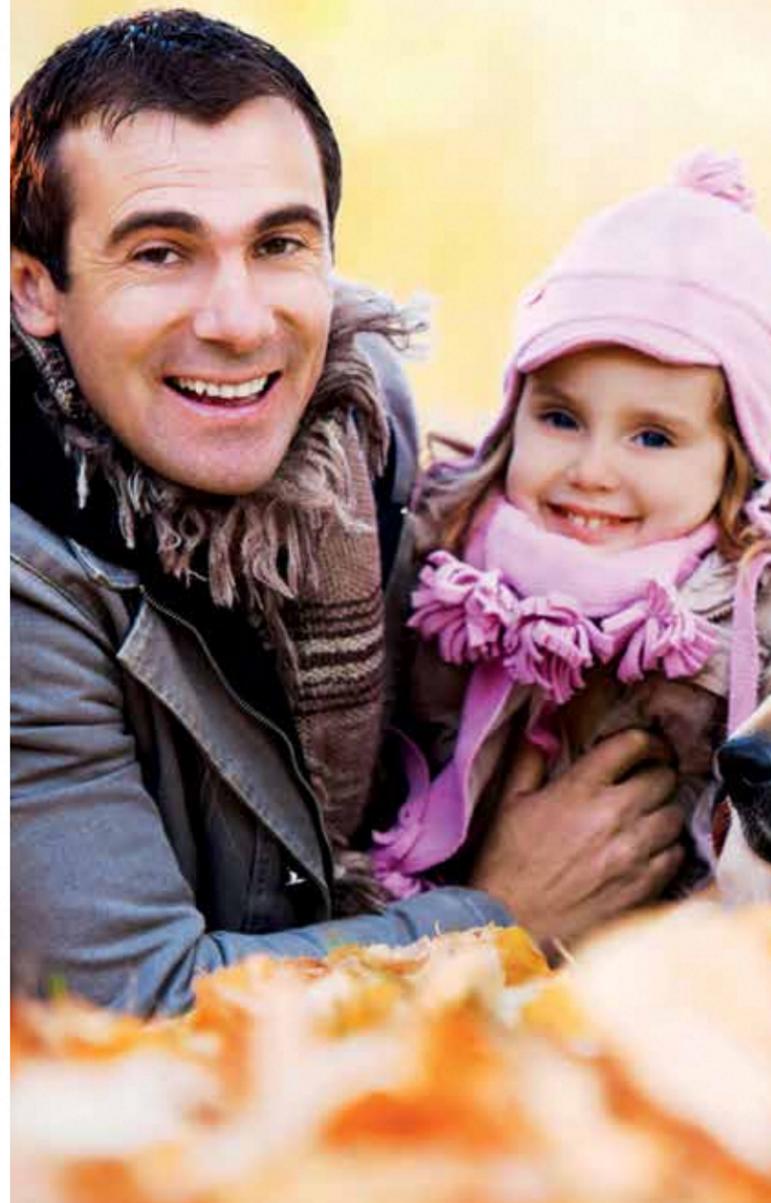
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feature article

10 fall into good oral health habits



cavity-free calendar



August

It's back-to-school season – a great time to schedule a regular dental checkup for your kids (and yourself). Roughly 750,000 children in the U.S. miss school every year due to dental problems – don't let yours be among them!

September

Happy Fruits & Veggies – More Matters Month! Eating well is one of the keys to good oral health, so be sure to add plenty of produce to your diet. Fall is a fantastic time to get it fresh!

October

Halloween doesn't have to be a spooky time for your teeth. Visit ToothFairyTrickyTreats.com for tips on how to help keep teeth free of creepy-crawlies.



two-word answers

Q: What's the most common chronic childhood disease?

A: Tooth decay.

keeping you covered: Delta Dental has a plan for you



If you are looking for dental insurance or know someone who is, Delta Dental offers affordable individual and family dental plans for people not covered by employer-sponsored plans. Good dental coverage is one of the most important purchases for you and your family. Here's why:

- Tooth decay affects more than a quarter of American children ages 2 to 5.
- Half of children ages 12 to 15 suffer from tooth decay.
- Moderate to severe gum disease affects almost 40 percent of American adults over age 18.
- A quarter of Americans ages 65 or older have lost all of their teeth.
- People who have dental insurance are more likely to visit the dentist and receive important preventive care.

The great news is that most oral health problems are preventable – and that's why dental benefits work. **Delta Dental plans are designed to help you receive the regular professional dental checkups you need to avoid problems such as cavities and gum disease or to prevent existing problems from advancing.** Preventive checkups are typically covered with no or a low deductible under most Delta Dental plans. Through a simple oral exam, your dentist may also detect early warning signs of many common infectious and chronic diseases, including HIV, herpes, chickenpox, mononucleosis, diabetes, Crohn's disease, leukemia, heart disease, kidney disease and cancer.

For more information on Delta Dental's individual or family plans, visit deltadental.com/individual-insurance.

readers ask, we answer



Kristen writes:

“I recently found out that I'm expecting and have heard I should avoid dental work during pregnancy. What if there's an emergency and I really need something fixed?”

Hi, Kristen. Congratulations! Contrary to what you may have heard, dental work isn't off-limits during pregnancy. Dentists are sensitive to the health needs of expectant mothers. Yours should work with you to minimize the need for X-rays and make sure that any procedures are done in the safest manner possible.

If dental work is needed, don't avoid it. Dental infections can harm your health and delaying treatment may result in more complex problems. If you haven't been to the dentist recently, schedule an appointment to have your teeth cleaned and checked ASAP. This gives your dentist a chance to take care of any immediate concerns and determine whether you have any other problems that should be addressed. If you need routine dental work, the second trimester is the best time to get it done.

Again, congratulations – and get that checkup scheduled!

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

the history of oral health: crazy teeth trends



Diastema, a gap between front teeth, can be considered unique and beautiful. In fact, some people have them added or have existing **gaps widened**, which can lead to tooth problems.

Grillz may be trendy in some circles, but these decorative tooth coverings may trap food between the teeth and gums, which can promote plaque, bad breath and tooth decay.

Popular in certain cultures until the mid-19th century, **tooth blackening** involved permanently dyeing teeth dark with various roots, woods, saps, clays and minerals. It is still a custom in some parts of the world.

Swishing oil in the mouth, also known as **oil pulling**, recently became a trend – but we recommend sticking to traditional oral health methods.



Queen Victoria not only kept her children's baby teeth, she also had them **made into jewelry** – similar to today's trend of silver-plating baby teeth to wear as charms.



mouth-friendly recipe: **pizzadilla**

Almost everyone loves pizza – and while it may be a delicious option, it’s not always the healthiest. These “pizzadillas” cut the amount of fat and calories but still provide all the tasty flavor of your favorite savory pie.

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp canola oil
- Four 8-inch whole-wheat tortillas
- 1 ½ cups shredded, part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1 oz turkey pepperoni, sliced
- 1 cup marinara sauce

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Brush the surface of a baking pan with the canola oil and place the tortillas on top. Sprinkle each tortilla with 3 tablespoons of cheese and an equal amount of pepperoni. Cover the pepperoni with the remaining cheese. Bake for 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve with marinara sauce for dipping.



It's a fact of life: If you've got kids, you've got germs. Many childhood illnesses and diseases affect children's mouths, which can impact eating and drinking habits, and even overall temperament. Here are four to look out for and what you can do to prevent and treat them.



HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE (HFMD)

You can probably guess which areas of the body this pesky, spot-causing infection usually affects. Infants and young children seem to be the most susceptible, but all kids younger than age 10 are at risk.

 **The cause:** Caused by viruses, HFMD can easily spread through person-to-person contact. Good hand washing helps prevent the spread of this disease.

 **The symptoms:** Red, blister-like spots on the tongue or the sides of the cheeks. Spots may also appear on gums, usually toward the back of the mouth. Hands, feet and the diaper area can also be affected. Your child may have a fever, a vague feeling of being unwell and a sore throat. A poor appetite or refusal to eat or drink is not uncommon.

 **The treatment:** HFMD spots, which aren't usually itchy, typically go away on their own within a week. Swishing salt water can help soothe sores. Help relieve other symptoms by making sure your child stays hydrated. Avoid acidic beverages, such as juice, that can be painful to mouth sores. If your child has a fever, try keeping it down with acetaminophen.

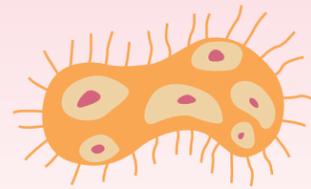
HERPANGINA

Children ages 3 to 10 are most at risk for this nasty little disease, which is often seen in the summer and fall.

 **The cause:** Again, viruses are the culprits here.

 **The symptoms:** Herpangina is characterized by small, blister-like bumps or ulcers, which usually appear in the back of the throat or on the roof of the mouth. They are often accompanied by a high fever, along with a headache, mouth pain and a decreased appetite.

 **The treatment:** Like HFMD, there's not much parents or doctors can do to cure the illness. A bland diet with no acidic or spicy foods will help keep mouth pain to a minimum. Hydration is also important. Acetaminophen helps relieve a fever.



THRUSH

Nursing mothers, beware: This fungal infection can spread to moms via their nursing babies – and vice versa.

 **The cause:** Thrush is a yeast infection caused by the overgrowth of the *Candida* fungus.

 **The symptoms:** The most obvious symptoms are small, white spots on the inside of your child's mouth or on the tongue. This may be accompanied by an unusual amount of crankiness and a refusal to eat or nurse. If you're a nursing mother, your symptoms may include pain while nursing and flaking, cracked or sore skin.

 **The treatment:** Thrush usually goes away on its own, but if your baby stops eating or nursing, a doctor is likely to prescribe an antifungal medication.

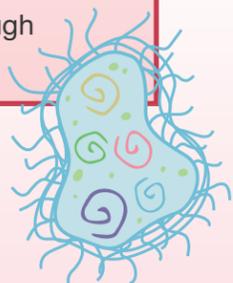
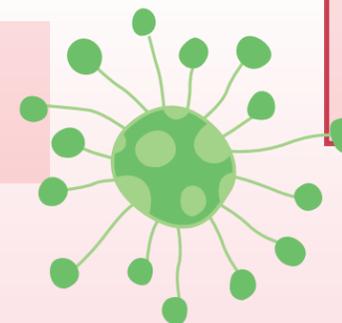
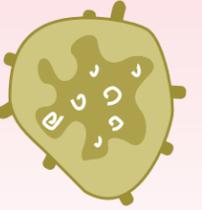
CAVITIES

Nearly 30 percent of children ages 2 to 5 have some form of tooth decay. It doesn't have to be this way: Cavities are nearly 100 percent preventable.

 **The cause:** Snacking on sugary or starchy foods or drinks without brushing and flossing properly afterward. Sugar and other carbohydrates feed the bacteria that cause tooth decay.

 **The symptoms:** Tooth pain or discoloration may be good indicators, but the dentist can often spot signs of decay long before you see a change in color or your child feels the symptoms.

 **The treatment:** A dentist can fill most cavities in a matter of minutes, but the best treatment is prevention. Teaching children good oral health habits from an early age is key. Brushing for two minutes twice a day, flossing once a day and visiting the dentist regularly are the best ways to make sure your little one stays cavity-free through childhood and beyond.



fall into good ORAL HEALTH HABITS

When you think of fall, you probably think of changing leaves, crisp air and football games on Friday nights – not oral health. But believe it or not, keeping your teeth healthy can fit right in with your autumnal activities!



Try a bonfire banana (seriously!)

Enjoying a warm bonfire on a cool night is one of the best things about autumn. Unfortunately, the crackling fire is often a good excuse for sticky marshmallows and sugar-laden s'mores. These sweets taste especially good when toasted but aren't the best choices for teeth.

You can still enjoy a sweet treat over the fire, though. Try a "banana s'more." It's a banana that has been peeled on one side and then stuffed with fillings like dark chocolate chips and chopped nuts. Wrap the stuffed banana in foil and roast on a grill or over a campfire for about five minutes. It's still a little sticky, but eliminates some of the sugar and adds nutritional benefits to a sweet fall treat.

No matter what kind of bonfire treat you choose, follow it with a swish of water and a good brushing before turning in for the night. Leaving goeey residue on your teeth is an invitation for bacteria and cavities.



Don't play games with your oral health



Though you may not be a starting quarterback or soccer standout, even a friendly pickup game can turn physical in a hurry. If you plan on playing sports this fall, or if you have an athletic child, make sure there's a mouthguard on hand. Whether it's the "boil and bite" kind purchased straight from the store or a custom-fit model made by your dentist, mouthguards can help prevent chipped and broken teeth and even tooth loss. Consider getting one before your annual "touch" football game at Thanksgiving. You know someone always ends up tackling!





An apple a day

After you've taken your family on an apple-picking outing, don't go home and immediately coat the apples in caramel or dunk slices in sugary dips. For a crunchy, tooth-friendly snack enjoy your crop as nature intended. If you must embellish your apples, try this easy dip recipe.



"Caramel" yogurt dip

- 1/8 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp agave syrup
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- One 6-oz container plain yogurt
- 1 tsp vanilla

Combine salt, syrup and sugar in a small saucepan and heat on low until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and stir in yogurt and vanilla. Allow to cool. Now dip away! For a thicker dip, refrigerate overnight.

Leave yellow to the trees

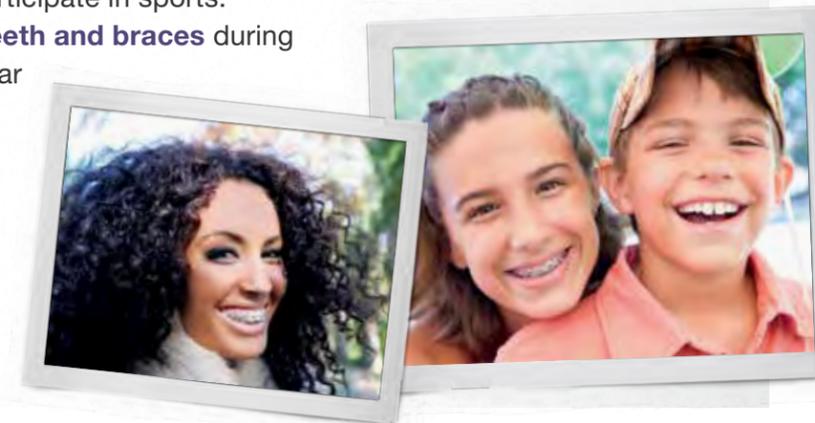
Whether they're lemon, golden or ochre, watching leaves change color in the fall is a pastime many people enjoy. But the same can't be said for yellowing teeth. To prevent stains and discoloration from foods, beverages or smoking, talk to your dentist about whitening options. From in-office bleaching sessions to over-the-counter whitening products, your dentist will have insight on the best method for your teeth.

5 MYTHS about braces



These tooth-straightening appliances have gotten a bad rap for years, so we want to set the record straight (pardon our pun)! Brace yourself for the truth about these five myths.

- 1 Myth:** Braces are painful.
Truth: Having braces is kind of like having a new pair of shoes. They may feel a little tight and sore at first, and sometimes following adjustments, but **after a short time they should feel pretty comfortable.**
- 2 Myth:** You'll have them on forever.
Truth: Braces usually **remain on teeth for one to three years.** Dentists and orthodontists say the length of time depends mostly on how severe the problem is and how well the patient follows treatment instructions. And, the treatment time isn't long when you consider the result: a lifetime of beautiful smiles!
- 3 Myth:** It's difficult to eat.
Truth: **Eating with braces isn't difficult, but you have to be mindful of how you eat** to avoid damaging the appliance. Cut raw fruits and vegetables into smaller pieces and avoid anything sticky, such as caramel and gum.
- 4 Myth:** They're only for children and teenagers.
Truth: According to the American Association of Orthodontists, **one in five orthodontic patients is an adult. It's never too late to correct problems** such as crooked or crowded teeth, overbites, underbites, jaw-joint disorders or incorrect jaw position. Braces can also be clear and can sometimes be placed behind teeth to stay slightly hidden.
- 5 Myth:** You can't play instruments or participate in sports.
Truth: **A mouthguard helps protect teeth and braces** during contact sports, and athletes should wear mouthguards regardless of whether or not they have braces. Playing musical instruments **may take some getting used to**, but after a little practice, it becomes second nature.



STAMP OUT



e-cigarettes

Think electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are a harmless way to wean yourself off smoking? Think again. Recent studies suggest that in addition to still containing addiction-causing nicotine, e-cigarettes may also promote dental disease.

Though smokeless cigarettes contain no tobacco and have fewer harmful by-products than traditional cigarettes, they still contain nicotine. Nicotine has been proven to harm teeth and gums by reducing the healing ability of mouth tissues and increasing the levels of bacteria that cause tooth decay.

Another downside: E-cigarettes seem to appeal to young people, with more than 1.8 million teens trying the trend so far. Instead of weaning teenagers from nicotine, public health officials are concerned that e-cigarettes have the opposite effect by introducing them to the drug.

The bottom line: While e-cigarettes *may* help some people kick the nicotine habit, there's not much evidence to support that they do. There *is* evidence, however, of the negative effects of nicotine, even the small amount found in e-cigarettes. If you aren't a smoker, don't start an e-cigarette habit, either.



reference check: is your dental specialist in-network?

After consulting with your general dentist, he or she may refer you to a specialist for further consultation or treatment. Delta Dental's extensive network offers access to a large number of in-network specialists, including oral surgeons, pediatric dentists and orthodontists. Visit deltadental.com to find an in-network specialist near you or to see whether a referred dentist is in-network. Make sure to confirm that the specialist is in your dental plan's network before your appointment.

Though many Delta Dental plans don't require general dentist approval to see a specialist, there are some exceptions. **Log in to your Delta Dental account at deltadental.com to review your benefits information and determine what your plan requires.**



on topic with dr. kohn *No Tricks, But You Can Treat Yourself in Moderation*

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.

Parents, don't feel too guilty when Halloween time rolls around. Your kids can enjoy their candy and still keep their teeth in tip-top shape. Cavities need time to grow – they don't happen overnight or from one candy splurge. Think of Halloween as a teachable moment. Emphasize to your children that it is okay to enjoy most things in moderation, especially when they've been taking good care of their mouths (and bodies) all year long by brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing daily and limiting sweet treats to mealtime. Even dentists enjoy the occasional sweet treat. Pass the M&M's® please!

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. Lori Henderson of Lori Henderson Pediatric Dentistry in Columbia, Missouri.

What advice do you give your patients? When parents have a child who doesn't want parental help brushing, I tell the child that I'm happy he or she likes to brush. But even big kids need a "brushing and flossing coach" like Mom or Dad to keep cavities away.

What's the best dental advice you've ever received? A master craftsman never complains about his or her tools.

Any funny stories from the dental chair? An 8-year-old boy came in for a checkup the week before Christmas. He asked me if the Tooth Fairy knew Santa. I told him that I didn't know. He said that he lost a tooth a few days ago and was saving it to leave near the tree on Christmas Eve because he wanted them to meet. Mom apparently knew nothing about this plan. It's a good thing she was in the room – otherwise the Tooth Fairy may have missed her chance to meet Santa!

In your opinion, which celebrity has the best smile? All my patients who have cavity-free, plaque-free smiles are superstars!

What is the most important thing you tell patients? First, I tell parents to bring their children for a well-baby dental visit when the first tooth erupts, and no later than the child's first birthday. Establishing a dental home is an important first step to attaining good oral health that can last a lifetime.

Second, I tell older patients to avoid what I call sipping and grazing. Frequent snacking and drinking sugary beverages put children and teens at increased risk for tooth decay. Plaque is like a factory that runs 24 hours a day, and tooth decay is the product. You slow down the cavity factory when you limit snacking.

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.