

grin!®

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

winter
2015
volume 4, issue 4

**All About
Gum Disease**

**Medical Problems That
May Cause Dental Issues**

5 **Pet Dental
Health Facts**

**How Diets Affect the
Health of Your Smile**

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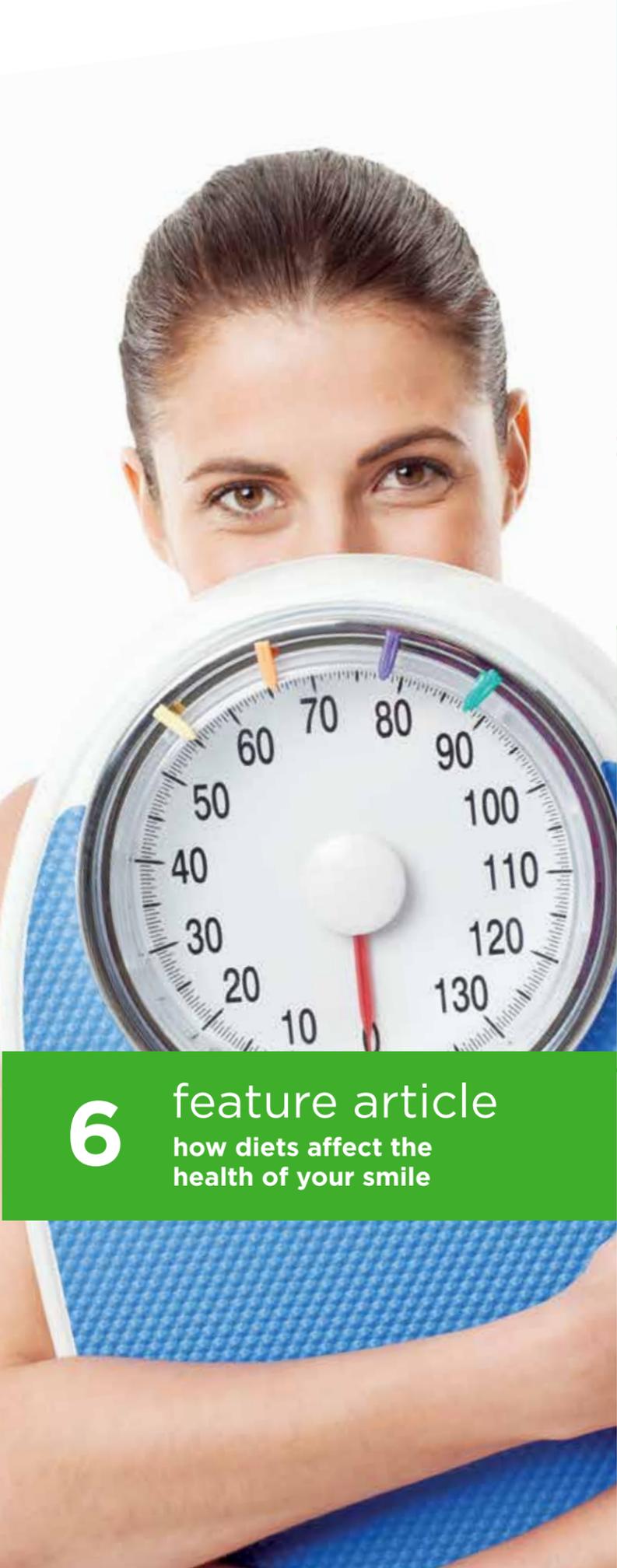
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cavity-free calendar

December
Happy holidays! It's OK to indulge in an occasional treat this season, but don't let snacking land you on the naughty list with your dentist.



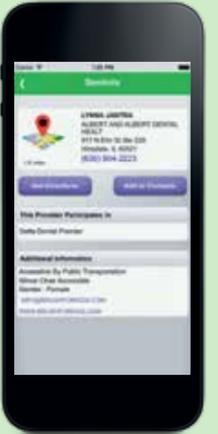
January
Ring in the New Year with a resolution that's easy to keep:
Smile more.

February
Gum disease can happen to anyone. **February is Gum Disease Awareness Month.** Check out page 14 to see how you can prevent and treat gum disease.



dental benefits on the go

Delta Dental's free mobile app gives you access to recent claims and coverage information from the convenience of your phone when you log in. You can also access your ID card. Looking for an in-network dentist? Our app can help. You can search for a dentist by network, dental specialty, location or a provider's last name. And by clicking on a dentist's name, you can view additional information, add the dentist to your contacts and get directions to the dental office. **Download our free app today using your Apple or Android device!**



two-word answers

Q: What's a good New Year's resolution?

A: Floss more!



on topic with dr. kohn

oral health in the news

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.



The press often covers the possible links between gum disease and other health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, pre-term infants and numerous other health issues. Likewise, researchers continue to investigate the nature of these associations. It is unfortunate, however, that almost half of U.S. adults over age 30 have gum disease, considering that it is so preventable. Although we often tune out the age-old advice for good oral health of "brush twice a day, floss daily, eat a healthy diet, limit sugar and see your dentist regularly," following it is still the best way to prevent gum disease and tooth decay. What's more, don't smoke and, if you do, quit. Smoking is believed to contribute to half of all cases of periodontal disease in the U.S. So here's the real news: Keep your mouth healthy through simple preventive measures. It may also help you manage other health issues.

readers ask, we answer

Shelly asks:

"I heard you shouldn't put your baby to bed with a bottle. Is that true?"



Hi, Shelly. It's true. Sucking on bottles or sippy cups with sugary drinks for long time periods can lead to tooth decay. Even natural sugars found in milk and juices can cause damage. For lifelong healthy smiles, offer water if your child takes a bottle or sippy cup to bed. You should wean your child from bottles between 12 and 14 months. Make sure to take care of your children's teeth and gums from the time they're born. Clean and massage their gums before their teeth emerge. Start brushing as soon as the first tooth comes in. Your baby should also see the dentist by the first birthday. A dental visit helps ensure everything is developing properly and puts your baby on track for a lifetime of great oral health.



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

mouth-friendly recipe: creamy avocado yogurt dip

With calcium-rich Greek yogurt and creamy avocado packed with vitamin C, this smile-friendly dip is great for holiday celebrations.



Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 2 ripe avocados, peeled and pitted
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Veggies to dip, such as carrots, celery and pepper strips

Directions:

Mix the yogurt, avocados, garlic, cilantro, lime juice and cumin in a blender or food processor until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer dip to a serving dish and enjoy with sliced veggies!





HOW DIETS AFFECT THE HEALTH OF *your smile*



2016. A new year. A new start. A new diet? Losing weight is a popular resolution made every year. Your new diet may whittle your waistline, but it can cause unwanted dental problems. Before you change your eating habits, learn how some popular diets can affect your smile.

low fat

Low-fat diets can interfere with your body's ability to absorb fat-soluble vitamins, such as A, D, E and K. Vitamin D is especially important – it helps your body absorb calcium. If you can't properly absorb calcium, your teeth and bones may weaken. Plus, many low-fat dairy foods contain more sugar than their whole-fat counterparts.



Additionally, fat helps your brain produce dopamine, a chemical that improves your mood. Diets low in omega-3 fatty acids can cause stress and anxiety. Stress can lead to tooth grinding (bruxism).

low carb

If you've been adhering to a low-carb diet, you may notice that your breath is a bit on the stinky side. There's a reason for that. As your body starts to burn fat instead of carbohydrates for fuel, it releases chemicals called ketones. High ketone levels often cause bad breath, known as halitosis.



Fortunately, mouthwash may mask it. Drinking more water, chewing on fresh parsley or sugarless gum and sucking on sugarless mints may also help. Otherwise, there's little you can do to combat ketone-related bad breath. A less extreme low-carb diet, one that doesn't kick your body into ketosis, is a better bet for your health and your breath.

low calorie

Many people turn to calorie cutting to lose weight. While this can be quite effective, dieters need to be careful they don't cut too many calories. Reducing the amount of food eaten can impact the amount of vitamins and minerals your body receives.



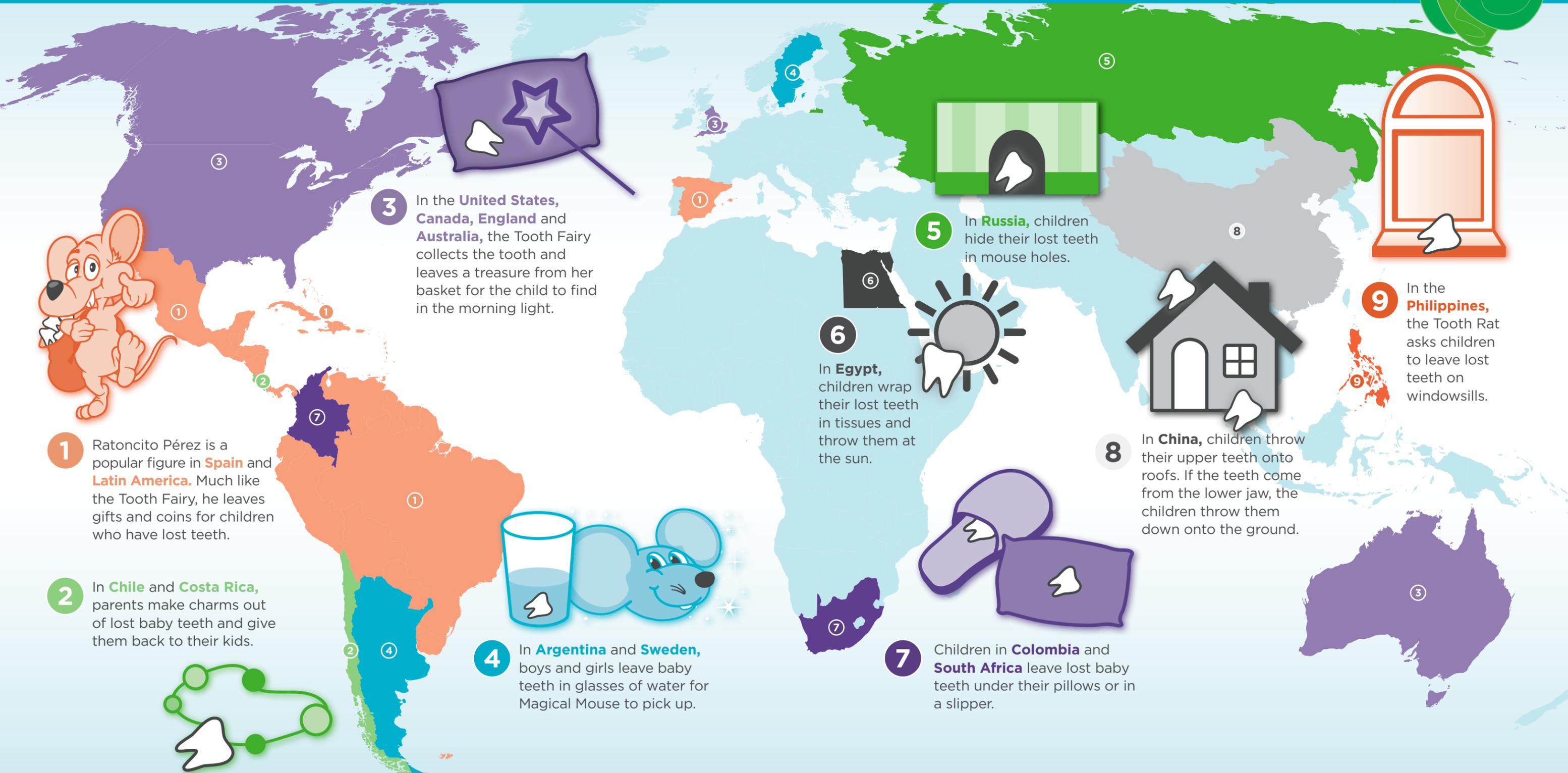
Besides being all-around unhealthy, malnutrition can weaken your jawbone and other bones, soften your enamel and harm your gums. The crunch when you chew fresh vegetables – a good low-calorie food – can help maintain the strength of your teeth and jaw.



Whatever your preferred weight loss method, it's important to make sure you partner with your physician to maintain your overall health. Mentioning a diet change to your dentist is also a good idea. They'll be able to help you address some of the associated oral health issues.

the history of oral health: tooth fairies around the world

The Tooth Fairy is pretty magical, but even she can't be everywhere at once. Luckily, she's just one of many fantastical beings around the world that collect baby teeth. Read about all these legends below.



1 Ratoncito Pérez is a popular figure in **Spain** and **Latin America**. Much like the Tooth Fairy, he leaves gifts and coins for children who have lost teeth.

2 In **Chile** and **Costa Rica**, parents make charms out of lost baby teeth and give them back to their kids.

3 In the **United States, Canada, England** and **Australia**, the Tooth Fairy collects the tooth and leaves a treasure from her basket for the child to find in the morning light.

4 In **Argentina** and **Sweden**, boys and girls leave baby teeth in glasses of water for Magical Mouse to pick up.

6 In **Egypt**, children wrap their lost teeth in tissues and throw them at the sun.

7 Children in **Colombia** and **South Africa** leave lost baby teeth under their pillows or in a slipper.

5 In **Russia**, children hide their lost teeth in mouse holes.

8 In **China**, children throw their upper teeth onto roofs. If the teeth come from the lower jaw, the children throw them down onto the ground.

9 In the **Philippines**, the Tooth Rat asks children to leave lost teeth on windowsills.

5 Pet Dental Health Facts

February is Pet Dental Health Month! In honor of the occasion, we rounded up some of our favorite interesting facts about the oral health of our four-legged (and two-finned) friends.

1

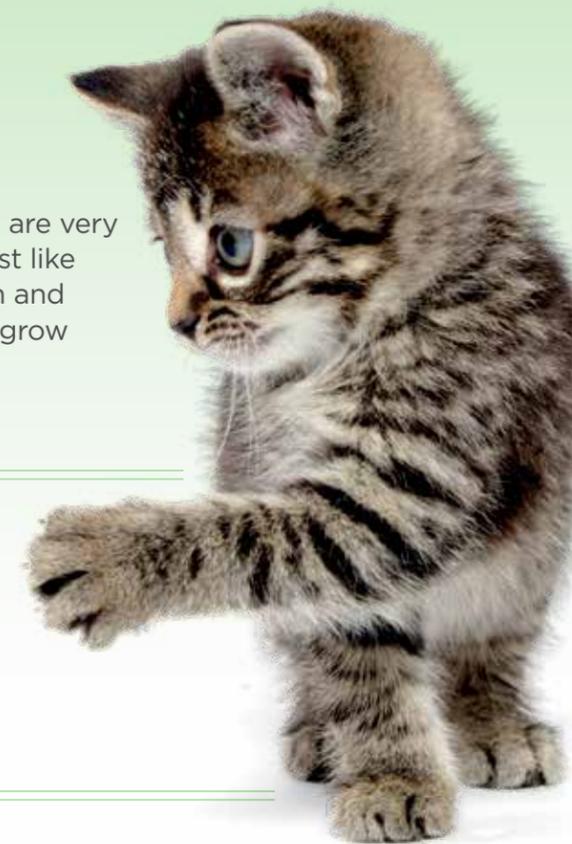
Dogs don't necessarily have cleaner mouths.

Despite the popular belief that a dog's mouth is cleaner than a human's, dogs' mouths are actually full of bacteria. In fact, by their third birthday, 80 percent of dogs suffer from gum disease. Like their owners, dogs need regular preventive dental care to maintain healthy mouths.



2

Goldfish have teeth. Their teeth are very flat, like our molar teeth – and just like our molars, they're used to crush and grind food. Goldfish lose and re-grow teeth throughout their lives.



3

Cats have fewer teeth than we do. Cats have just 30 teeth (compared with humans' 32). Like ours, their teeth perform specific functions – including grasping, tearing and crushing food.

4

A rabbit's teeth never stop growing. Though wild rabbits have plenty of things to gnaw on to help keep their growing teeth in check, pet bunnies rely on wooden toys and timothy hay. If rabbits' teeth get too long, they may find it too painful to eat, affecting overall health.



5

A horse has more teeth than brain matter. The typical adult horse has 36 to 40 permanent teeth that are each about four inches long. Since the average horse brain weighs just under two pounds, their teeth occupy more space than their brains do!



Your pet's oral health plays a vital role in their overall health, just as yours does. Take advantage of Pet Dental Health Month by talking to your veterinarian about how you can keep Sparky's mouth healthy. And while you're at it, take the time to schedule your next visit to the dentist as well.

Medical Problems That MAY CAUSE DENTAL ISSUES

Health issues don't have to originate in your mouth to harm your teeth and gums. Be aware that illnesses from diabetes to ulcers can erode teeth, cause bad breath and even turn your tongue black!



ACID REFLUX. Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or acid reflux, is often detected by dentists because a major sign of the disease is tooth erosion. Acidic juices from the stomach flow upward into the mouth and dissolve tooth enamel over time. When you experience a reflux episode, protect your teeth by rinsing vigorously with water or chewing sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow and reduce acid in your mouth. Do not brush your teeth immediately after experiencing reflux – the bristles can damage enamel already weakened by acid.



ULCERS. Appearing as sores in the lining of your stomach or small intestine, ulcers are often the result of the bacterium *H. pylori*. These bacteria can weaken the protective coating of your stomach. Although ulcers won't hurt your oral health, the medicine used to combat the ulcer can turn your tongue black temporarily. Don't worry – the side effect is harmless.



KIDNEY DISEASE. This disease often causes patients to develop fishy breath, because the kidneys can no longer effectively filter waste and toxins from the blood. If you notice that you have fishy breath, visit your doctor. Kidney disease left untreated will lead to kidney failure.



DIABETES. People with this disease have too much glucose (sugar) in the blood for an extended period and are more likely to have gum disease and lose teeth. Good oral health habits, however, can help lower the risk of these dental problems. If you have problems with your gums or teeth as a result of diabetes, take care in brushing and flossing teeth and talk to your dentist.



HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE. The medications often used to treat high blood pressure can have a side effect known as gingival enlargement. This condition causes the gums to swell and grow over the teeth – eventually leading to severe periodontal infection if left undeterred. Early detection and treatment of gingival enlargement can curb this condition before it becomes too severe.

keeping you covered: preventive dental care

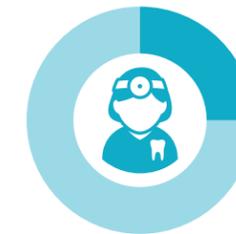


Celebrate National Children's Dental Health Month this February by making sure your kids' smiles are healthy. Proper preventive dental care – including regular dental exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants – helps ensure a lifetime of healthy smiles.

Delta Dental's Preventive Dental Care Study* found:



Less than one-third (29%) of children younger than 3 years old had any dental service.



One-fourth (25%) of children ages 3-18 did not receive any dental service.



More than one-fourth (26%) of children up to age 18 are at high risk for tooth decay.



Nearly 65 percent of high-risk children did not receive two fluoride treatments per year.



More than 85 percent of high-risk children ages 10-14 did not receive sealants on their second molars.



Nearly 67 percent of high-risk children ages 6-9 did not receive sealants on their first molars.



Preventing or addressing dental issues before they get worse is much less expensive than treating severe dental problems. Plus, most Delta Dental plans cover preventive care with no or a low deductible.

*Delta Dental's Preventive Dental Care Study is an annual study that investigates whether high-risk children and adults receive the preventive care they need. For the calendar year 2014, the study analyzed more than 97 million dental claims. For more information on the study, visit deltadental.com/pdcstudy.

ALL ABOUT GUM DISEASE

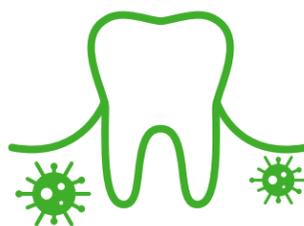


Nearly half of adults over 30 suffer from some form of gum disease, also known as periodontal disease. Research shows a link between gum disease and many other chronic illnesses, including heart disease and diabetes, all of which are inflammatory diseases.

The matter is so serious that governors in 28 states have signed proclamations declaring February Gum Disease Awareness Month. Find out the facts about gum disease – and what you can do to prevent it.

WHAT IT IS

Gum disease is a chronic infection. It can leave you with sensitive and loose teeth; persistent bad breath; and gums that are tender, red and swollen. In most cases, it's caused by the bacteria in the buildup of plaque under and along the gums. The earliest stage of gum disease is called gingivitis, while advanced gum disease is called periodontitis. Gum disease is the leading cause of tooth loss in adults.



CAUSES

A number of factors contribute to plaque buildup, leading to gum disease. Poor dental hygiene, including brushing and flossing improperly, can be a major contributor. A poor diet and lack of vitamin C can also make gums vulnerable to infection, as can stress. All forms of tobacco, including cigarettes and chewing tobacco, have been linked to gum disease. Medical conditions, such as diabetes, HIV and pregnancy, and use of some medications may also increase your risk for gum disease.

Finally, genetics can play a role. As many as **30 percent of people may be at risk for gum disease** just because of their genes, making them up to **six times as likely to have periodontal disease** as those without a family history of the problem. That's another reason regular preventive dental visits are so important.



TREATMENT

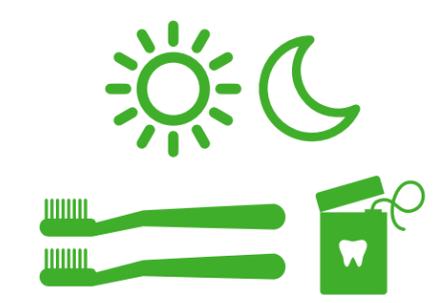
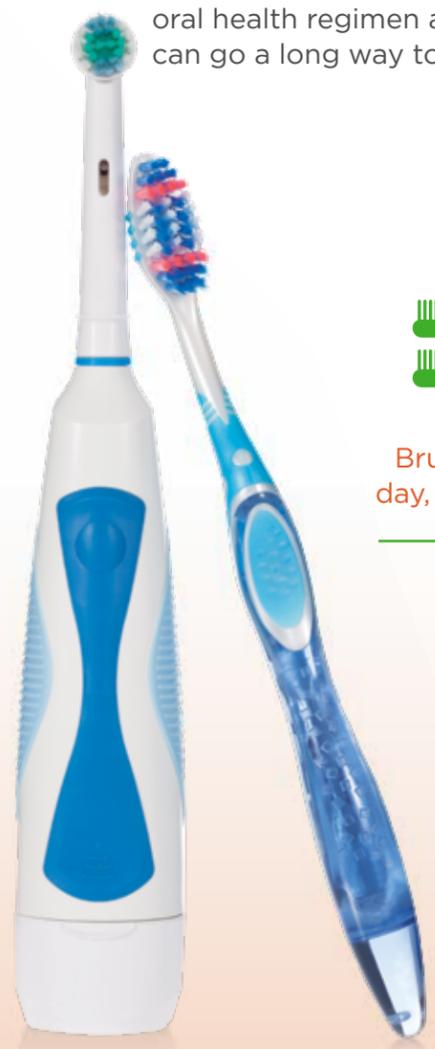
To treat gum disease, especially for moderate cases, dentists often recommend a special procedure called scaling and root planing. Scaling involves the removal of plaque and tartar from the surface of the tooth, while planing targets the tooth root. This deeper cleaning, focused on areas below the gum line, often requires anesthesia.

If the problem is severe, your dentist may recommend periodontal surgery to remove the tartar, bacteria and diseased tissues. This treatment reattaches your gum tissue to healthy bone. Your dentist may also prescribe a special mouth rinse, antibiotic gel or oral medication to help control harmful bacteria.



PREVENTION

The best way to prevent gum disease is to follow a routine oral health regimen and overall healthy lifestyle. These steps can go a long way toward keeping your gums healthy.



Brush for two minutes, twice a day, and floss at least once a day.



Avoid using tobacco products.



Eat a balanced diet low in sugar.



Stay on top of your routine dental visits for regular cleanings and exams.

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. Jose R. Gonzales of G Dental Studio in Goodyear, Arizona.

Do you brush and floss as much as you recommend?

I see a lot of problems that could have been avoided with a simple brushing and flossing routine, so, yes – a majority of the time, I brush more often than most!

Do you have a favorite floss flavor?

Cinnamon.

Do you have any cavities?

I have had them.

If you could tell patients to stop doing one thing, what would it be?

Stop chewing ice.

What's your favorite dental joke?

I usually tell patients that their problems are all in their heads! Most get it – however, if they don't, I kindly joke that all of their teeth are in their head.

Do you have any traditions or special things in your office?

Patients can watch movies and relax during their visits at G Dental Studio. Our office has a spa-like atmosphere. It is very calming.



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.