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An oral health
guide for
women 50+

5 years of good
oral health adds up
to positive results

The anatomy of a
better burger

What helping
others does for you



in this issue of
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5 years of good oral health adds up to positive results

If you follow the recommended guidelines for maintaining your oral health, the benefits can really add up. Here's a look at this worthy investment.

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grin![®] more

Visit the *Grin!* website for more ways to keep your smile healthy.



View web-exclusive content, videos and more!

WELLNESS



7 harmful habits and how to break them

You may be surprised how bad some common behaviors can be for your oral health. See how you can stop these habits and keep your smile healthy.

LIFESTYLE



Discourage your kids from using tobacco

Did you know talking to your kids about tobacco, including vaping, should start around age 5? Learn valuable talking points to help your kids say no to tobacco.

Access the digital version anytime, anywhere at grinmag.com.



On topic with Dr. Dill: 3 reasons people avoid going to the dentist

If you haven't visited the dentist lately, you aren't alone. More than a third of Americans (37%) visit the dentist less than once a year, according to Delta Dental's 2019 survey. When asked why, here's what respondents said:

MONEY



2 IN 5
(39%)

don't have dental benefits and can't afford treatment.

FEAR



70 million
Americans

are afraid of the procedure they'll need. The number has grown in the last four years from 26% to 31%.

TIME



1 IN 5
(19%)

can't find the time in their busy schedules for a dental visit.



Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Network Strategy, Joseph Dill, DDS. With more than 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.

Seeing the dentist regularly can actually save you time and money. That's because preventive care is typically free with a dental plan. These routine visits allow your dentist to identify problems early, when they are less costly and complex to treat. Find out more about the benefits of preventive care on page 17.

But what if you're nervous about your visit? It helps to find a dentist you're comfortable with. Once you're at the dentist's office, be open with the dental staff about your fears. Your dentist, dental hygienist and the rest of the staff can help answer your questions and ease any anxiety you may have.

Your health is important. So before you skip that next checkup, know that taking the time to visit the dentist can help keep you smiling for years to come. ■



Zucchini
is a good source of calcium that strengthens your teeth and bones.

Avocado oil
has anti-inflammatory properties that can help prevent gum disease.

Chicken
is rich in phosphorus, which helps keep teeth healthy by protecting your tooth enamel.

Mouth-friendly recipe: grilled chicken-and-veggie kebabs

Spring has sprung and the weather is warming up — it must be grilling season! These colorful kebabs are easy to throw together (or make in advance). The combination of tender, juicy chicken and crisp vegetables bursts with flavor when grilled together with a savory mix of garlic and other Italian herbs.

Ingredients:

- 1 each red and yellow bell pepper, chopped into large pieces
- 1 red onion, chopped into large pieces
- 2 zucchinis, sliced
- 3 tablespoons avocado oil
- 2 tablespoons dry Italian seasoning
- 1 pound boneless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size pieces
- Pinch of sea salt and black pepper
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder

Directions:

- 1 Toss veggies in a bowl with 2 tablespoons of avocado oil and 1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning.
- 2 Place chopped chicken breasts in separate bowl and add remaining tablespoon of avocado oil. Season with salt, pepper, garlic powder and remaining tablespoon of Italian seasoning. Mix well, making sure all chicken pieces are coated.
- 3 Place chopped veggies and seasoned chicken in refrigerator to marinate.
- 4 Soak wooden skewers in water for 20 to 30 minutes while chicken and veggies marinate in refrigerator.
- 5 Heat grill to high heat.
- 6 Thread peppers, onion, zucchini and chicken onto skewers, alternating between veggies and chicken.
- 7 Turn heat down to medium and coat grill with nonstick cooking spray if needed. Add kebabs to grill.
- 8 Grill for 2 to 3 minutes, turn and repeat until chicken reaches minimal internal temperature of 165 F on an instant-read thermometer.
- 9 Enjoy! ■

History of oral health: tobacco changes, but the dangers don't

Tobacco has a long history dating back centuries. It's one of the world's biggest public health threats today, killing more than 8 million people each year.¹ Here's a look at how tobacco products have changed over the years.

6,000 B.C.
The first tobacco plants are believed to have grown in the Americas. By about 1 B.C., indigenous people began smoking tobacco, taking it as medicine and using it in cultural ceremonies.



1600s
Snuff, a smokeless tobacco, was named "snus" in Sweden. Because it was expensive and sold in cans made of silver or gold, snus became a status symbol and popular gift among the upper class.




1800s
Chewing tobacco became widespread in the U.S. Baseball players and coaches used it to produce saliva to moisten their mouths and gloves. Cancer deaths led the sport to ban smokeless tobacco in the 1990s.



1900s
Cigarettes peaked in popularity throughout this century. Packs of cigarettes were widely distributed to soldiers in World War I and II.



2000s
E-cigarettes were introduced in Europe and the United States, and later identified as tobacco products. Today, vaping with these devices is more popular than smoking cigarettes among high schoolers.

There is no safe tobacco product. Tobacco can increase your risk of cancers of the lungs, mouth, throat, cheeks, gums, lips and tongue. It can also cause cavities, stained teeth, bad breath, gum disease, receding gums and tooth loss. It's best to avoid using any tobacco to protect your oral and overall health. ■



Readers ask, we answer

Jackson asks:
"How can I protect my smile while sleeping?"

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

Hi, Jackson! A number of dental dangers can occur in your mouth overnight. Here's a closer look at what can happen, and what you can do about it:

1 Bacteria buildup

Saliva usually helps wash away bacteria from your mouth. Because your body produces much less saliva when sleeping, your mouth accumulates bacteria that can cause bad breath.

Tips for relief: Brush, floss and rinse with a fluoridated mouthwash before you go to bed and again in the morning.

2 Mouth breathing

If you have a stuffy nose, you may be breathing through your mouth when you sleep. Mouth breathing is one of the most common causes of dry mouth, which can lead to bad breath, gum disease and cavities.

Tips for relief: Drink water before bed and keep water by your bedside in case you wake up thirsty. If you're congested, use an over-the-counter saline mist and sleep with your head elevated.

3 Snoring

More than 90 million Americans snore every night.¹ Like mouth breathing, snoring can cause dry mouth.

Tips for relief: Make sure you get enough sleep regularly so you aren't overly tired. Sleep on your side, hydrate throughout the day and avoid alcohol before bedtime.

4 Teeth grinding (bruxism)

Almost 2 in 5 parents say their children show signs of teeth grinding,² while only 8% of adults grind their teeth at night.³ This can cause teeth pain, sensitivity, chips and fractures. It can also lead to headaches, earaches and jaw pain.

Tips for relief: Reduce stress and avoid caffeinated drinks after dinner. Talk with your dentist about a mouth guard for you or your children.

Check with your physician and dentist to learn more about these potential solutions. Together, you can address your specific situation and better protect your smile while you sleep. ■

¹World Health Organization

^{1,2}National Sleep Foundation
³National Center for Biotechnology Information

An oral health guide for women 50+



Age brings more experience and wisdom — but it also comes with certain health challenges. Hormonal changes during and after menopause can increase your risk of dental disease. Keep your mouth and body young by learning what to look for, and what steps you can take, as you enter this season of life.

1,300,000 American women finish their menstrual cycles and become menopausal each year. This usually starts around age 51.¹

As a woman, a third of your life may be happening after menopause. This life-changing event increases your risk of dry mouth. As your body produces less estrogen and progesterone, your saliva may change and you may not have enough to protect against tooth decay, gum disease and bad breath.

About 4 million Americans suffer from Sjogren's syndrome,² an autoimmune condition that also causes dry mouth, as well as dry eyes. It's nine times more common in women³ and often shows up in your 40s, 50s and 60s.

Your chances of having "burning mouth syndrome" increase with hormonal changes and dry mouth, as well. This is a burning sensation that can extend from your tongue to your lips, gums, cheeks, palate and throat.

Your dentist can recommend ways to relieve your oral symptoms and maintain good oral health for years to come. Let your dentist know if you're undergoing menopause or think you may be going through it. Share any oral pain, dryness, sores or other problems you are experiencing, which will help better diagnose and treat your symptoms.

80% of the 10 million Americans with osteoporosis are women.⁴ This condition causes your bones to become weaker and more likely to fracture.

Your risk of developing osteoporosis increases when you reach menopause due to a significant drop in estrogen, the hormone that protects your bones. Bone loss in your jaw increases your risk of gum disease. Having osteoporosis also makes it three times more likely that you'll experience tooth loss.

Help keep your bones strong by:

- Eating a balanced diet that includes foods rich in calcium and vitamin D such as milk, cheese, yogurt, spinach and salmon.
- Maintaining regular exercise such as walking, jogging, dancing and lifting weights.
- Avoiding smoking and vaping.
- Limiting alcohol to no more than one drink a day.⁵

¹National Center for Biotechnology Information

²Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation

³National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

⁴National Osteoporosis Foundation

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Continued from page 9

68% of adults 65 and older have gum disease. One-fifth have untreated tooth decay, while nearly all have had a cavity.⁶

These habits are still among the best ways to protect your oral health:

BRUSH
2
TIMES A DAY
with fluoride toothpaste

FLOSS
1
TIME A DAY

SEE THE
dentist
REGULARLY

Simply getting older also increases your risk of oral cancer. The median age of those diagnosed with oral cancer is 62 years old. While men are at greater risk, tobacco and alcohol use increase the risk of oral cancer for both men and women.

It's important to continue visiting the dentist regularly to keep up with your oral and overall health. Delta Dental plans typically cover 100% of routine checkups that can help prevent these conditions or diagnose them early. Since original Medicare does not cover routine dental care, consider whether an individual plan or Medicare Advantage with dental is right for you when you retire.

Here are a few more tips for good oral health as you age:

- Drink plenty of water (preferably fluoridated).
- Know that there may be side effects of your medications, including dry mouth.
- Be sure to let your dentist know if you develop any pain, lumps, sores, swelling or numbness in your mouth or throat. ■

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The power of a smile: what helping others does for you



It's amazing what volunteering can do — not just for the people receiving your help but also for you! Research shows that helping others can provide a boost to your own mental, oral and physical health.



Mental health
Scientists say that the act of giving boosts production of three brain chemicals — dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin (sometimes called the “happiness trifecta”). Increasing these brain chemicals can improve your mood. In addition, volunteering provides a sense of purpose and appreciation. Studies show volunteering lowers your risk of depression by increasing interaction with others and building a support system.



Oral and overall health
While there is little research directly linking volunteerism and oral health, there's plenty of evidence suggesting it can help. That's because the oxytocin released in your body when you volunteer combats cortisol, your body's main stress hormone. By managing and lowering your stress, you can also reduce the likelihood of oral health problems, ranging from mouth sores to teeth grinding and tooth decay.



Physical health
Volunteering can help you stay physically active and socially connected. Research shows it can reduce the risk of high blood pressure among older adults.¹ That, in turn, lowers the risk of a heart attack or stroke. Volunteering can also decrease pain among those with chronic or serious illness — and may even lead to a longer life, according to several studies.

There's no better way to share a smile than to lend a hand. Helping others can make a difference in your health and well-being. So start today by sharing your time or money, donating food or clothing, or helping a family member, neighbor or friend. ■

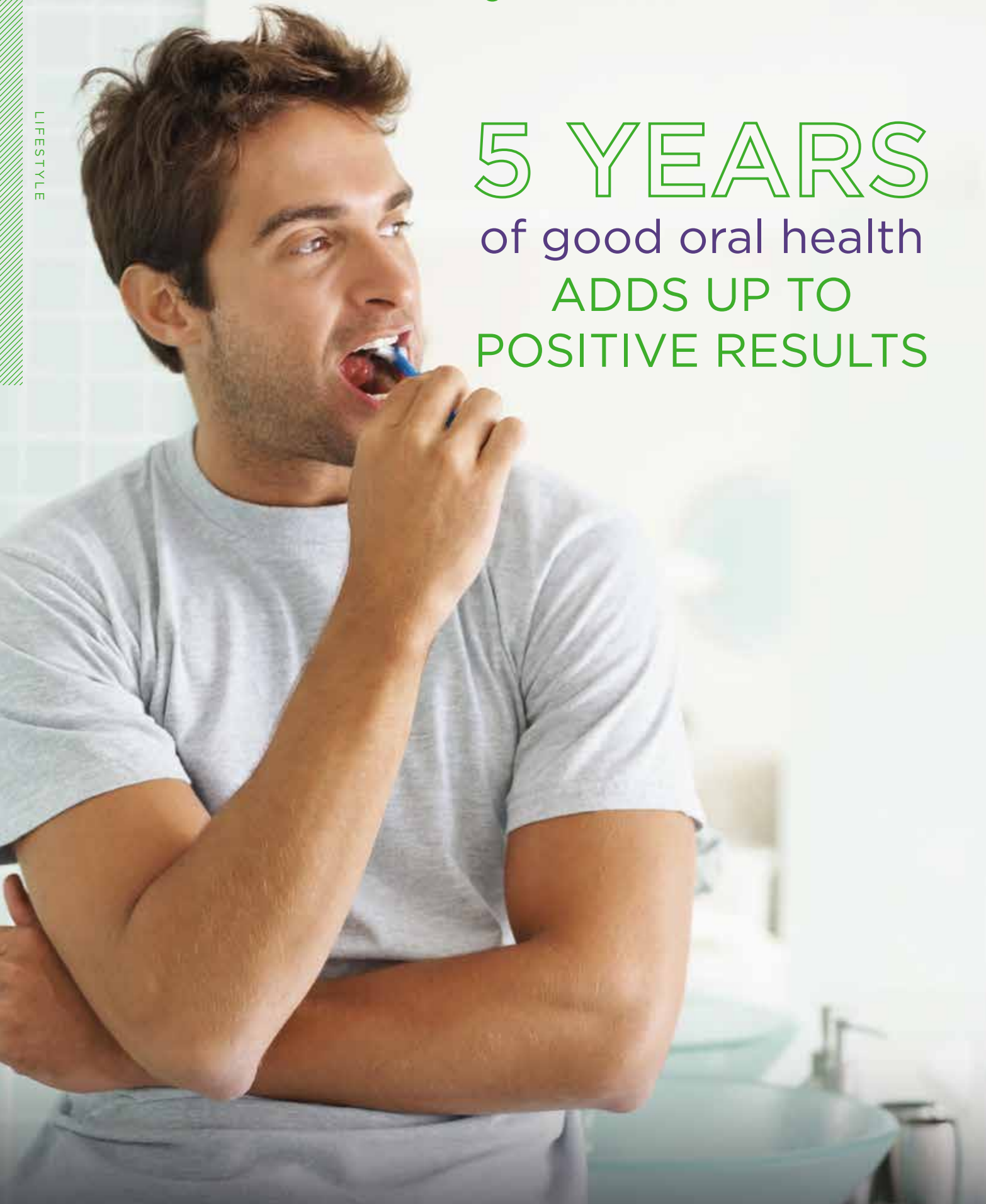
⁶Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

¹Carnegie Mellon University study, Psychology and Aging

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5 YEARS of good oral health ADDS UP TO POSITIVE RESULTS

LIFESTYLE



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For a healthy smile, it's important to practice good habits daily, including brushing, flossing, maintaining a well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water. Your perseverance can add up to good oral and overall health for the long term.

How do your healthy habits add up? You may be surprised by the totals from five years* of good oral health.

LIFESTYLE



Brushing

Brushing removes plaque from teeth and gums. Without brushing, this sticky film of bacteria can cause tooth decay, gum disease and more. Studies suggest oral bacteria and severe gum disease might also play a role in diseases outside of the mouth, including diabetes and heart disease. To remove plaque, brush your teeth twice a day for two minutes each time.

5-year
TOTAL

7,304 minutes
(more than 5 days!)



Changing toothbrushes

If you use the same toothbrush for too long, it can become less effective at removing plaque. As the bristles break down, it's more difficult to reach places a new toothbrush can. To maintain maximum effectiveness, change your toothbrush (or toothbrush head on an electric toothbrush) every three months — or sooner if the bristles begin to look frayed or worn.

5-year
TOTAL

APPROXIMATELY 20
new toothbrushes or toothbrush heads



Using toothpaste

Toothpaste almost always contains fluoride — a vital mineral that strengthens tooth enamel, protects teeth from decay and helps prevent acids from causing cavities. That's why you should always use fluoride toothpaste when you brush. While you only need a pea-sized amount of toothpaste each time you brush, even that small amount adds up over time.

5-year
TOTAL

MORE THAN 2 pounds
of toothpaste

*Five-year period includes one leap year.

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Flossing

Brushing alone doesn't clean the entire surface of your teeth. Flossing removes plaque from between your teeth. If you don't remove plaque, it can harden into tartar that collects along your gum line. You should floss daily with an 18-inch piece of floss.

5-year
TOTAL

MORE THAN $\frac{1}{2}$ mile
of floss



Drinking water

Water helps clean your mouth by washing away cavity-causing sugars and acids. Regularly drinking water (preferably fluoridated) can also relieve or prevent dry mouth, which left unchecked can lead to tooth decay, gum disease and more. While the amount of water needed varies by individual, you should drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses daily¹ for oral health benefits and to prevent dehydration.

5-year
TOTAL

913 gallons
of water at minimum



Visiting the dentist

During a dental visit, your dentist can uncover cavities, gum disease and oral cancer early on, when they are easier and less costly to treat. Many other diseases, including diabetes, Crohn's and blood disorders can show signs in your mouth as well. Remember to schedule regular dental visits for a thorough oral exam and a cleaning.

5-year
TOTAL

AT LEAST **5-10 dental visits**
for exams and preventive treatments

Taking great care of your smile really adds up to better health. Keep up your daily diligence! ■

¹Mayo Clinic

Your spring smile list



1
Fly a kite and see how high you can take it.

- ② Fire up the grill and throw on your favorite seasonal veggies. Need inspiration? Try our chicken-and-veggie kebab recipe on page 5.
- ③ Lie in the grass and watch the clouds drift by for a quick mental break.
- ④ Plan a friendly April Fools' prank and see if you can pull it off — and make someone smile in the process.
- ⑤ Search for a four-leaf clover at your local park.
- ⑥ Add fresh tulips to brighten your space.
- ⑦ Build a birdhouse and place it in the garden, then watch to see who settles in.
- ⑧ Pay it forward and buy a stranger their morning coffee or tea. Learn some of the positive benefits of helping others on page 11.
- ⑨ Buy a colorful umbrella and enjoy a stroll in the rain.
- ⑩ Dust off your inline skates and hit the trails — but don't forget your mouth guard! ■

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Is this trendy drink actually good for me?

Kombucha continues to make a huge splash in the health food industry with bottles now readily available in many grocery and convenience stores. But what is this fizzy drink, and is it really healthy?

As it turns out, kombucha is nothing new. This fermented tea drink was first made in China around 220 B.C. The drink made a comeback in recent years with kombucha sales increasing 21% to \$729 million in 2018.¹ These non-alcoholic, fermented beverages now represent 10% of refreshment beverage sales.²

Making kombucha usually starts with black or green tea and sugar. A combination of good bacteria and yeast turns the sweet tea into a fizzy drink after about a week of fermentation.

Whether you make your own kombucha or buy it at your local grocery store, this drink has several potential health benefits. It can provide your body with probiotics, a good bacteria in your gut that can aid with digestion and reduce inflammation. It's rich in antioxidants, which can help protect your body against disease. And research shows the green tea often found in kombucha may reduce your risk of heart disease, protect against cancer and manage Type 2 diabetes.

Yet kombucha also contains lots of acid and sugar that can attack and erode your tooth enamel, the hard outer layer of your teeth. Erosion exposes your dentin, or inner layer of your teeth. This can cause your teeth to become more susceptible to decay and more sensitive to certain hot, cold, sweet or spicy foods. It can also cause your teeth to look yellow over time.

Try these tips to keep your mouth healthy if you choose to drink kombucha:

- **Rinse your mouth with water** immediately after drinking this acidic beverage. Water helps dilute acid that is lingering in your mouth.
- **Drink kombucha with food**, rather than between meals. Foods containing calcium, such as cheese and yogurt, can help neutralize the acids in your mouth.

Our verdict: Enjoy kombucha in moderation while being mindful of its potential risks to oral health. Consider drinking fluoridated water, milk or unsweetened green tea as alternatives that are lower in acid and sugar, and better for your smile. ■

^{1,2}The Fermentation Association

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What does preventive dental care cover?

Did you know that every dollar spent on preventive care could help save you money later on procedures that are more urgent, complex and costly? Routine dental checkups, cleanings and sealants can make all the difference when taking care of your oral and overall health. Here's a breakdown of what's included in that preventive care:



Routine dental checkups and cleanings should be scheduled at least once a year, or more often if you have a high risk of dental disease. Delta Dental's free LifeSmile™ Score tool (mydentalscore.com) can provide a quick look at your current risk that you can then share with your dentist. Most dental plans cover at least two exams and cleanings at little or no out-of-pocket cost. A professional cleaning at your dentist's office uses special tools to remove tartar and plaque buildup that you aren't able to remove on your own. This lowers your risk of developing tooth decay and gum disease. While examining your mouth, your dentist can even detect symptoms of other diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and blood disorders like leukemia.



X-ray images of your mouth may be taken by your dentist or dental hygienist to better evaluate your oral health. These images go beneath the surface to provide a more detailed look inside your teeth and gums, which helps your dentist identify problems that may be developing. Check your dental plan for details on which X-rays are covered. X-rays may need to be taken more frequently if you are at higher risk for cavities or gum disease.



Professional fluoride treatments can be a key defense against cavities if you're at high risk for decay. Dental plans usually cover these treatments for children. They are suggested for kids 18 and under, and for adults with certain oral conditions, including tooth decay, braces or dry mouth. Professional fluoride treatments have significantly more fluoride than tap water or toothpaste, and take only a few minutes to apply.



Dental sealants go a step beyond fluoride by providing a thin, plastic coating to the chewing surface of your teeth (typically your back molars) to keep cavities from forming. It's best to get sealants before cavities can form, so they are usually recommended when molars initially break through (around age 6 for first molars and age 11 or 12 for second molars). Sealants can reduce the risk of tooth decay by 80%.¹ Coverage on sealants can vary, but most dental plans cover sealants as preventive care for children under 18 on their first and second molars.

Preventive dental care keeps your teeth and gums healthy. It can identify potential problems in your mouth and whole body. So schedule a visit to your dentist today if you don't already have one on your calendar. ■

¹American Dental Association

The anatomy of a better burger

It's that time of year when mouth-watering burgers are hitting the grill. Before you go grocery shopping for the ingredients, you should know that some parts of a burger are better for your smile than others. Let's take a closer look.



Bun

Whether you choose a ciabatta roll or sesame-seed bun, the bread can really make the burger. Yet as you chew, that bun can break down into simple sugars and stick to your teeth. Bacteria feed on these sugars, forming acid that can damage your tooth enamel and cause tooth decay and gum disease. Try wrapping your burger with lettuce instead of a bun to add an extra crunch. If you don't want to skip the bun, go for a whole-wheat option that contains more fiber, less sugar and isn't as quick to stick to your teeth.



Pickle, tomato and lettuce

While pickles and tomatoes may add some extra flavor to your burger, their acidity isn't great for your smile. Having these as part of your meal, rather than by themselves, will help. A better addition to your burger may be leafy greens such as kale, spinach or lettuce. Not only are these greens high in calcium, they also contain folic acid, a B vitamin that could help prevent gum disease.



Condiments

If you're adding some ketchup or barbecue sauce, know that these tomato-based sauces contain lots of sugar and acid that can weaken your tooth enamel and leave your teeth more vulnerable to decay. Mustard and mayonnaise are also acidic because they're made with vinegar. Be sure to combine these condiments with other foods, such as cheese, to help neutralize their acidity.



Onions

Research shows that adding raw onions to your burger could reduce the bacteria that cause cavities and gum disease. Just watch out for the bad breath it might cause!



Meat

Beef is a great source of iron, protein and vitamin B12, which are important for your oral and overall health. Not getting enough vitamin B12 can cause mouth ulcers, a swollen tongue and a burning sensation in your mouth. Choosing beef from grass-fed cows may have better health benefits, including up to five times as much omega-3 fatty acids, which research shows may help prevent gum disease. Prefer a meat-free option? Veggie and plant-based burgers can also be healthy choices if they contain vegetables, whole grains or beans.



Cheese

Turning your burger into a cheeseburger can help protect your smile. That's because, as a dairy product, cheese neutralizes and fights off the negative effects of acids. It builds enamel and restores your teeth with calcium and phosphate, which are needed to prevent cavities.



Go ahead and fire up the grill. If it's a burger you're craving, you can counter the effects of a starchy bun and acidic toppings by choosing whole grains and adding some cheese and leafy green lettuce. Wash your burger down with some refreshing water to rinse your mouth of any leftover food. ■



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