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CAUTION: summer fun ahead

Virtually perfect
volunteer
opportunities

5 types of sugar
substitutes

Are you a summer
produce expert?



in this issue of
grin!

WELLNESS + NUTRITION



12

Caution: summer fun ahead

Summer is even better when you're prepared for all the fun in the sun. See how to enjoy swimming, snacking and more while avoiding sunburns, splinters and other dangers.

- 5 Mouth-friendly recipe: grilled chicken and berry salad
- 6 Don't let sugar and acid spoil your summer smile
- 7 Readers ask, we answer: Why do I have morning breath?

NEWS + RESEARCH



18

5 types of sugar substitutes

There are delicious ways to enjoy a sweet taste without having a sour effect on your teeth. Weigh the pros and cons of some of the top swaps for sugar.

- 4 On topic with Dr. Dill: connection between breast cancer and gum disease
- 16 Time for a tube trade-in?
- 17 Dental records 101

FUN + INSPIRATION



8

Virtually perfect volunteer opportunities

You can do a world of good without ever leaving your home. Get inspired by ideas for virtual volunteering and see how it can benefit your body, mind and smile.

- 11 Are you a summer produce expert?
- 15 Your summer smile list: 10 to-do's that will make you grin

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



View web-exclusive content, videos and more!

NEWS + RESEARCH



Technology, trends and teeth

Technology breakthroughs and new products could change the way you take care of your smile. Get the latest info about what's new at the dentist's office and in the oral health care aisle.

WELLNESS + NUTRITION



Reduce teeth staining

Some healthy items can stain your teeth. But you don't have to give them up completely! See how you can reduce the chances of staining your smile.

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



On topic with Dr. Dill: connection between breast cancer and gum disease

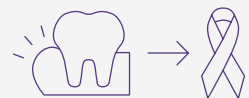


Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Network Strategy, Joseph Dill, DDS. With more than 30 years of experience in the dental field, including eight in private practice and 16 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

More than 250,000 Americans are diagnosed with breast cancer every year¹ — and your oral health may play a factor in your risk. A number of studies have suggested women with gum disease can be at higher risk of developing breast cancer.

Some studies have found that postmenopausal women with gum disease may be more at risk of breast cancer than postmenopausal women who do not have gum disease. When combined with a history of smoking, the risk can be even higher.

Gum disease, also referred to as periodontal disease, can appear in several ways. In its earliest stages, gum disease can be painless with only minor signs. Good at-home oral health care and regular dental visits are both important to maintaining healthy gums and catching any issues early. Along with regular dental checkups, keep a watchful eye on your gums for any puffiness, consistent bleeding or if gums start pulling away from your teeth. Catching these signs early is critical, as starting treatment right away will help prevent a more serious case of gum disease from developing.



The risk of breast cancer may be slightly higher for women who have gum disease.

One of the most common courses of treatment for any kind of cancer is chemotherapy. Like most medications and treatments, chemotherapy comes with a long list of potential side effects, including those that can influence oral health. If possible, see your dentist one month prior to starting chemotherapy treatment to help avoid serious oral health problems and lessen potential side effects.

Potential side effects of chemotherapy

- Painful mouth and gum inflammation
- Difficulty eating, swallowing or talking
- Dry mouth that may lead to tooth decay and gum disease
- Burning, peeling or swelling of the tongue
- Increased risk of mouth infection
- Changes in taste
- Mouth sores

Monthly self-exams are an important part of preventive care. Be sure to check for any hard lumps or abnormalities in your breast tissue. ■

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Mouth-friendly recipe: grilled chicken and berry salad

If summer had a taste, it would be found in this antioxidant-rich salad! Bursting with in-season produce like fresh basil, plump blackberries and peppery arugula, this dish celebrates the goodness of the season and will satisfy your taste buds.

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breast
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, divided
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon black pepper, divided
- Cooking spray
- 2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons honey
- 1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 ounces mixed baby greens
- 2 ounces arugula
- 3 ounces fresh basil, stems removed and large leaves torn
- 6 ounces fresh berries of your choice (blackberries, raspberries, strawberries and blueberries)
- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- Handful of walnuts

Directions:

- 1 Preheat grill to medium-high heat (about 450 F).
- 2 Brush chicken breasts with 1 tablespoon oil and sprinkle evenly with ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper.
- 3 Coat grill grate with cooking spray; add chicken to grate.
- 4 Grill chicken uncovered for about 5 to 6 minutes per side or until a meat thermometer inserted in thickest portion of breast registers 165 F.
- 5 Let stand for 5 minutes before cubing.
- 6 Whisk together remaining 3 tablespoons oil, vinegar, honey, mustard, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper in a large bowl.
- 7 Add mixed greens and basil; toss gently to coat.
- 8 Divide salad evenly among four plates and top with chicken, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, walnuts and goat cheese.
- 9 Enjoy! ■



Basil

has phytochemicals that help protect against oral cancer.

Blackberries

are a great source of vitamin K, which is important for strong teeth and bones.

Arugula

is full of potassium, which helps lower the risk of tooth decay.

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Don't let sugar and acid spoil your summer smile

Warmer weather means summer treats like frosty ice cream and refreshing lemonade are available everywhere. Here's how you can help keep your smile healthy during a season full of cool treats — some of which are full of cavity-causing sugar and/or acid.



Eat right

You can avoid damage from sugary (snow cones, s'mores, pies) and acidic (citrus fruits, sour candies) foods and drinks. Consume them only in moderation and pair them with foods that are low in sugar and acid to reduce the damage they can cause.

Some beverages, such as fruit punch, lemonade and sweet tea, are doubly dangerous because they are high in both sugar and acid.

Add to a meal

When you do indulge, eat treats as part of a meal when your mouth is producing more saliva. This adds minerals back to your teeth to help reverse damage caused by sugar and acid.

Frequent snacking on sugary and acidic items increases the amount of time your teeth are exposed to their damaging effects.



Make it fast

If you do occasionally drink a sugary or acidic beverage, it's best to consume it all in one sitting. Sipping slowly exposes your teeth to sugar and acid for a longer period of time.

Avoid swishing or holding these drinks in your mouth longer than needed. Simply sip and swallow.

Chew on these

Add raw, crunchy fruits and vegetables to your meal. Apples, pears, bell peppers, cucumbers and more work as natural toothbrushes by washing away leftover food from your teeth.

Chewing sugar-free gum after a meal increases saliva flow, which also helps wash away leftover bits of food that feed the bacteria in your mouth.



Have a drink

Follow your meal by drinking water to help clean acid and sugar from your mouth. Tap water with fluoride is the best choice.

You can also have a glass of plain milk. The calcium in milk can help neutralize cavity-causing acid.

Practice self-care

Make sure to brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day for at least two minutes each time, floss daily and see your dentist regularly.

Wait about 30 minutes after consuming acidic foods or beverages to brush, as acid can soften enamel that could be damaging by brushing. This also gives your saliva a chance to wash away acid and add minerals back into your enamel naturally. ■



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Readers ask, we answer



Abby asks:
"Why do I have morning breath?"

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

Morning breath, or halitosis if we want to be formal, is experienced by everyone to some degree. You're not alone!

While you're sleeping, your normal flow of saliva slows significantly, and the microorganisms (bacteria included) in your mouth get crazy eating, multiplying and eventually dying. These bacteria live in the mountains and valleys of your gums, your tongue and any other cozy places they can find, and release sulfur compounds. Those compounds are what produces the smelly odor you call morning breath.

What contributes to morning breath?



Snoring or mouth breathing while sleeping dries your mouth



Daily medications like antihistamines or prescribed blood pressure pills can cause dry mouth



Seasonal allergies that result in increased post-nasal drainage — bacteria's favorite food



Cigarette smoking can dry up saliva — your natural mouthwash



Poor dental hygiene can leave food particles in your mouth overnight and cause plaque buildup

Getting rid of morning breath

You can do many things to mitigate bad morning breath like making sure you brush, floss and rinse every day, especially before going to bed. And try not to eat a midnight snack after brushing. You can also gargle with salt water to kill odor-causing bacteria and reduce post-nasal drip.

Make sure you keep your tongue clean. The tongue, especially in the way back, is one of bacteria's top hiding spots. Brushing your teeth and tongue daily is great, but you can step up your game with a tongue scraper.

Stay hydrated. Water flushes your system of toxins, aids in saliva production and reduces bad bacteria in your mouth. Jump-start your saliva production with a smile-friendly breakfast, including eggs, whole grains and fruit.

Maintain regular preventive visits with your dentist, and if you're still struggling with morning breath, bring it to their attention. Your dentist can provide additional tips as well as treatments for more severe cases. You should also address mouth-breathing by talking to your physician about potential sleep apnea. ■



VIRTUALLY PERFECT volunteer opportunities

Volunteers are the backbone of many essential organizations. While there's a great need for volunteers all year long, some people cut back on their volunteering during warmer months.

Fortunately, there's an innovative way to make it even easier to help others. You can do virtual volunteering from the comfort of your home. Most people can serve as a virtual volunteer, as it doesn't have to take much time and doesn't require transportation. All you need is a computer, internet connection and/or a phone. Here's how you can beat the heat and spread smiles at the same time.



Nearly half (48%) of respondents in one survey said COVID-19 has influenced their volunteering efforts, including an increase in virtual volunteering.¹

¹Good Housekeeping

Don't know how to get started?

To find out about virtual volunteering opportunities, you can simply contact an organization you like and see if there are any opportunities for you to help.

Or get in touch with one of these organizations that can match you with a need:

- VolunteerMatch
- United Nations online volunteering database
- Catch a Fire
- Create the Good
- Points of Light



How can you use your skills?

Are you trying to figure out what type of virtual volunteering to do? The good news is there are plenty of opportunities available to:



Use your knowledge of history.

Assist the Smithsonian as a digital volunteer by transcribing materials to make historical data more accessible to everyone.



Engage with the elderly.

Brighten a senior's day with ideas for activities or strike up a friendship through regular phone calls.



Share your career skills.

Help students get a head start by giving them practical, real-world career advice or assist current workers with navigating job challenges.



Help heroes.

Start a veteran or military spouse on a successful career by conducting mock interviews, offering career counseling and more.



Act as a role model for kids.

Send handmade cards to sick or injured children, volunteer to tutor under-served youth or mentor high school students.



Display your talents.

Spread positivity and kindness through writing, art and music.



Support people in crisis.

After training, assist those who are feeling overwhelmed, survivors of traumatic experiences, people who are experiencing complicated or chronic health conditions, or people living with mental illness.



Keep smiles healthy.

Volunteer behind the scenes at a nonprofit dental care organization, and assist the experts as they increase access to oral health care and educate the community about healthy smiles.

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Continued from page 9



Remember, you can always be helpful by donating to those in need. Homeless shelters need oral hygiene products to help prevent disease and tooth loss. Toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss and mouthwash (especially in travel sizes) are all in high demand.

How can you benefit from volunteering?

In addition to helping those in need, volunteering is good for the volunteer. Studies have shown that volunteering increases self-confidence and self-esteem. Volunteering is good for your mind and body, as it improves your mood and reduces stress, alleviating your risk for stress-related illnesses. That includes oral health issues like gum disease, teeth clenching and grinding, and mouth sores.

Studies show that the more people volunteer, the more happiness they enjoy. ■

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Are you a summer produce expert?



Which of these mostly healthy fruits are also highly acidic and may cause tooth erosion?

- (A) Dates, figs and kiwi
- (B) Pineapples, oranges and grapefruit
- (C) Bananas, coconuts and papayas

Enjoy smile-friendly foods that are low in acid, including watermelons, cantaloupes, honeydew melons, peas, peppers, asparagus, spinach and broccoli.

They're tasty. They're healthy. But they can also stain your teeth.

Which produce fits this description?

- (A) Dark berries, cherries and pomegranates
- (B) Turnips, sweet potatoes and broccoli
- (C) Strawberries, nectarines and mangoes

Try chewing a piece of sugar-free gum after eating a teeth-staining food. It will stimulate saliva to help clean your teeth.

Which of these are not only healthy but also clean your teeth as you chew?

- (A) Celery and cucumbers
- (B) Apples and pears
- (C) All of the above

Crunchy nuts also act as a natural toothbrush. They stimulate teeth-cleaning saliva when you chew them.

After consuming foods that cause bad breath, like garlic and onions, what can you do to help reduce their effects?

- (A) Try some spicy food or eat a can of tuna
- (B) Eat an apple or chew on mint leaves
- (C) Rinse your mouth with fruit juice or an energy drink

A tongue scraper is effective for removing odor-causing particles that your toothbrush can't reach.

Which of the following foods contain the most calcium?

- (A) Strawberries, peaches and grapes
- (B) Tomatoes, corn and cauliflower
- (C) Kale, spinach and collard greens

Did you know your body can't make calcium? Even though it's one of your body's most plentiful minerals, all of your teeth-strengthening calcium comes from your diet.

How many did you get right?

Answers: B, A, C, B, C

5 Garden guru
You know your fruits and vegetables inside and out.

3-4 Farmers market fan
Grow your knowledge just a little more and you'll be a produce expert.

0-2 Growing greenhorn
You're not there yet. But your eagerness to learn more can help your smile. ■

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CAUTION:

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Oh, sweet summertime. It's for fun, sun and delicious seasonal snacks. Before you bask in the sunshine, be aware of everything the season brings — even the not-so-fun things (we're looking at you, sunburn).



Smart summer snacking

Did you know splinters can happen in your mouth, too? Ouch! If chewed on, wooden ice pop sticks can splinter off and find their way into kids' gums. Take them away as soon as they're done with their cool treat.

Gum damage can lead to infection, which may result in time-consuming and costly dental treatment. Rough and frequent toothpick use can also cause damage to existing dental work like fillings or veneers. What should you use instead? Dental floss or a water pick are both great mouth-friendly alternatives.



You can make your own refreshing summer snacks like dark chocolate-covered frozen bananas, blueberry-watermelon granitas or even banana-berry ice cream — all without the added sugar.



Keep a close eye on kids when they're enjoying hot dogs, marshmallows and grapes. They're just the right size to pose a major choking risk. Marshmallows' sticky texture is also perfect for finding its way in between your teeth and their extra sugar can lead to tooth decay — enjoy only in moderation this summer.



Continued from page 13

Summer weather safety

Extreme heat is especially dangerous for children, seniors and those with pre-existing health conditions. For both their oral and overall health, ensure everyone you care for is keeping cool by staying hydrated with plenty of water. After some time in the sun, consider finding a shady spot to take a rest. It's also important to keep items like water bottles, toothpaste and toothbrushes out of the heat to avoid melting the plastic and releasing harmful chemicals.



With the heat comes the sun's powerful UV rays. Stay stocked up on SPF 30+ sunscreen and lip balm to avoid painful sunburns after a day spent outdoors (cloudy days count, too!). It's best to avoid the 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. time frame, but if you can't skip it, apply sunscreen 30 minutes before venturing outside, and don't forget to reapply throughout the day.



Safely enjoy the outdoors

Under the heat of the sun, metal and plastic playground equipment reach toasty temperatures. Before anyone swings, slides or climbs, make sure to give the equipment a test touch to avoid burning legs or palms.

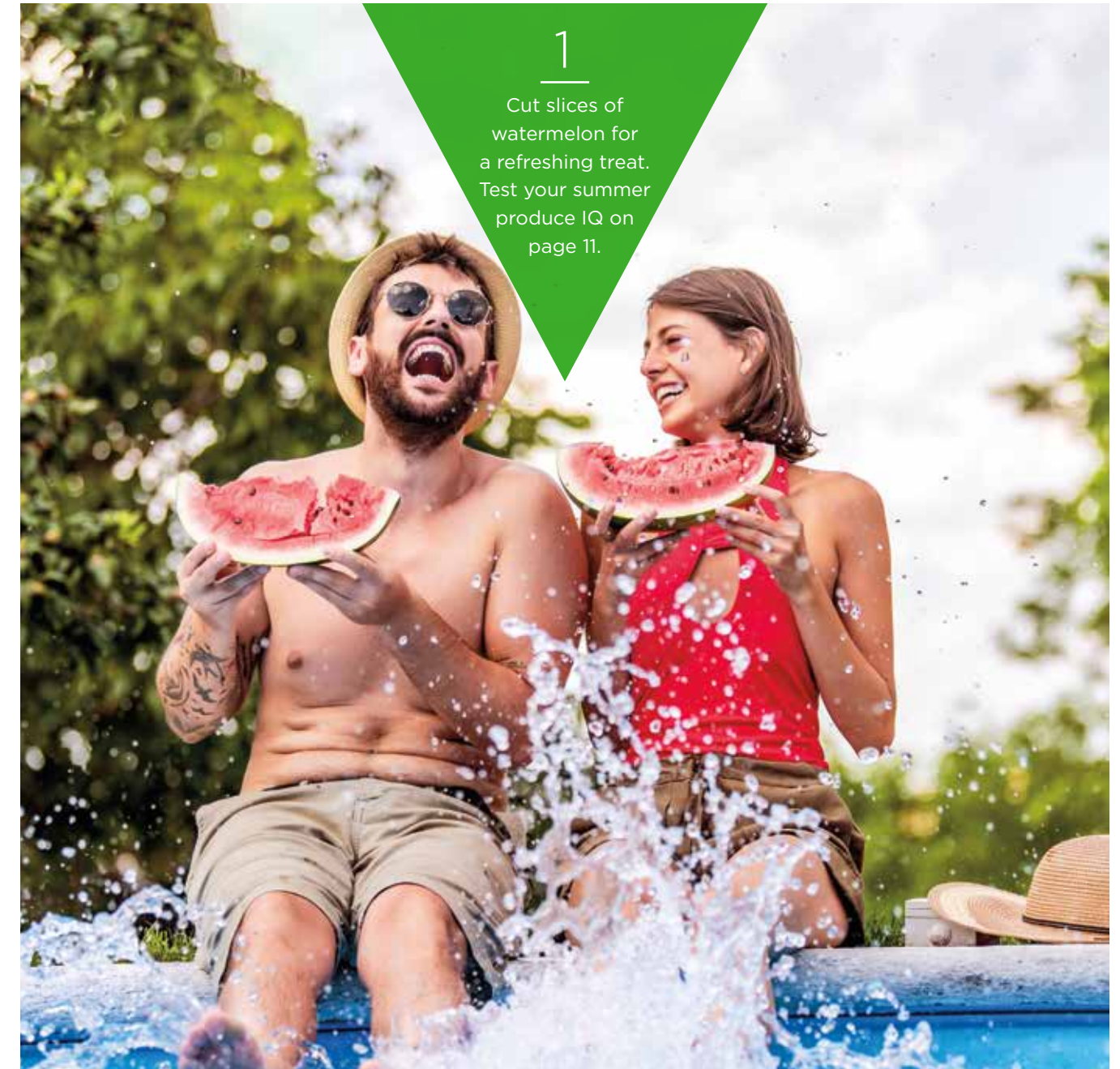


The garden hose is also a fun summer toy, but keep the kids and pets away when you first turn on the tap. Some water will always remain in the hose after its last use, and when it's left out in the boiling sun, it can reach a scorching 120 F.

Pools, playgrounds and backyards are magnets for dental emergencies. Keep an eye out for:

- **Wire grill brushes:** One aggressive brush too many, and you're making a trip to the ER to remove metal bristles from your gums after biting into your hot dog or hamburger. Try a wooden scraper instead.
- **Trampolines:** Summer has us all jumping for joy, but even the most protective netting and padding won't protect against a collision resulting in a broken or chipped tooth.
- **Pools:** There's nothing quite like taking a cool dip after a long day in the sun. However, water + concrete + pool toys = danger. Before diving in, make sure the pool deck is clear of obstacles and excess puddles to avoid slips and falls that could mean a major dental emergency. And listen to the lifeguard on duty — no running! ■

Your summer smile list



1

Cut slices of watermelon for a refreshing treat. Test your summer produce IQ on page 11.

- 2 Take a moment to meditate under the clouds.
- 3 Pump up your tires and hit a new bike trail.
- 4 Hit the open road and see where it takes you.
- 5 Stargaze in your backyard and try to name the constellations.
- 6 Step up your grilling game by adding fresh veggies to your menu.
- 7 Create an obstacle course in your backyard.
- 8 Decorate the sidewalk with inspiring messages.
- 9 Freshen up your patio with lights and colorful planters.
- 10 Volunteer! Find some great volunteer ideas on pages 8-10. ■

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Time for a tube trade-in?



Traditional toothpaste tubes made of plastic, aluminum and other non-recyclable materials have been filling landfills for years, leading consumers to consider more sustainable options for cleaning their teeth. Enter: toothpaste tablets.

What are toothpaste tablets?

They are chewable, mint-sized tablets typically stored in reusable jars or recyclable packaging. The tablets are made from a toothpaste formula without the water — allowing it to be pressed into a pill-like form.

Toothpaste tablets have a similar ingredient base as traditional toothpaste from a tube, just without the water. Most commonly they're derived from ingredients like xylitol (a natural sweetener that fights bacteria), calcium carbonate and sodium carbonate (baking soda).

It's important to note that not all toothpaste tablets are cleared by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or American Dental Association (ADA) as a cavity-preventing product. So, when looking for a toothpaste tablet, make sure to look for toothpaste tablets that contain fluoride — the key ingredient to keeping your smile healthy.

How do you use toothpaste tablets?

Place a toothpaste tablet in your mouth and begin chewing. You can let your saliva naturally break it down into a paste or give it a boost with a sip of water. This can be especially helpful for those who suffer from dry mouth.

Once it's broken down into a paste-like texture, brush using a wet toothbrush for two minutes as you normally would. Rinse, and done!

Our verdict: Toothpaste with fluoride is key to preventing cavities and keeping your smile healthy and clean. Talk to your dentist before switching to a toothpaste tablet to make sure it contains enough fluoride to properly fight cavities. If your major interest is in making a more eco-friendly, sustainable switch, consider swapping your plastic tube for a glass jar. ■

What else should I know about toothpaste tablets?

Because they can be formulated without water, toothpaste tablets can be made with little to no preservatives whatsoever — a key factor for those looking to make the all-natural switch.

You can find toothpaste tablets online and in most drugstores. They're a travel-friendly option for when you're on an airplane or camping outdoors without running water.

Look for tablets that come in packaging that tightly closes to lock out moisture to lengthen their shelf life after opening.

Leave toothpaste-making to the professionals — making your own DIY toothpaste means you're missing out on the important benefits of teeth-strengthening fluoride.

Toothpaste tablets are much more “hardy” than traditional toothpaste. So, if they accidentally get left in the car after a summer grocery run, no need to worry about coming back to a melted mess.



Dental records 101



You're encouraged to keep thorough records of your taxes, credit card statements, vaccinations and more. But what about your dental records? Could you put your hands on them in the next 10 minutes?

Even though your dental records are property of your dental office, you can obtain a copy of them and the wealth of information they provide. But it'll likely take more than 10 minutes.

What are dental records?

Also known as patient charts, dental records include:

- Past diagnoses
- Clinical notes
- Dentist-patient communication
- Treatment consent documents
- X-rays

These records will also include the typical “admin” information such as your contact information, address and employment details. A typical health history form is also filled out at your dental office to document any specific health concerns or medications that would potentially influence your dental care.

How can you get your dental records?

STEP 1: Request your records. We recommend you put the request in writing so both you and your provider have a record of the request, but you can also request in person.

STEP 2: Obtain a copy of your records from your dental care provider. The original documents remain property of your dental office, and they may charge a small fee for preparing and mailing the records if you choose to go old school with hard copy records.

Electronic medical records (EMRs) are also available so information can be shared with you securely and seamlessly.

Why would you need access to your dental records?

When you change dental providers, you'll want to make sure your new dentist has a full understanding of your dental history. You can do so by having your previous provider transfer your records, including all X-rays, to your new dentist or asking for direct access to your own records. If you are having a medical procedure, your physician may need to look through your dental information to account for any additional considerations before the procedure. ■

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5

TYPES OF sugar substitutes



Want to add a little something sweet to your everyday menu, but don't know where to start? It can be a real challenge to identify which sweetener option is best for satisfying your sweet tooth *and* keeping your smile in tiptop shape. Here's your go-to guide for finding the perfect substitute.

Natural sugar superstar: dates



- High in natural sugar, dates can help regulate your blood sugar levels.
- They're a bit messy and sticky when eaten alone, but they can be a great addition to your morning breakfast smoothie or afternoon protein shake for a kick of sweetness.
- There are also date syrups available — giving you a sweet alternative to refined sugar without subjecting your teeth to their natural, chewy stickiness that can linger and cause cavities.

Make dates into a thick paste by softening in about 4 cups of simmering water for 10 minutes, then blending with water. You can use this as a direct replacement for refined sugar in recipes.

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Plant-based powerhouse: stevia



- Stevia is extracted from the leaves of the *Stevia rebaudiana* shrub, and is calorie-free and up to 450 times sweeter than sugar.
- Research has shown that using stevia as a sugar substitute may prevent weight gain and can reduce overall blood sugar levels.
- While generally safe, some studies have found stevia can disrupt your natural gut microbiome. This can disturb your oral and overall health.

Although it is sweeter than sugar, stevia does taste slightly bitter.

Deliciously beneficial: honey



- Honey has an abundance of plant compounds that provide anti-inflammatory and antioxidant benefits, as well as trace amounts of vitamins and minerals.
- Honey has a slightly lower glycemic index than table sugar. This means it is digested and absorbed slower and won't have as negative of an effect on your blood sugar — making it healthier for you and your teeth than refined sugar.
- Honey is still high in calories and cavity-causing sugar, so enjoy it in moderation.

The types of plant compounds in honey depend on the type of bee that produced it and the type of flower from which the bee was collecting pollen.

Two-steps to delicious: coconut sugar



- Coconut sugar is made in a natural, two-step process: cut into the flower of the coconut palm and collect the sap, then place the sap under heat until the water has evaporated.
- Unlike table sugar, coconut sugar retains some nutrients found in the coconut palm, so you and your smile aren't consuming empty calories.
- Like honey, coconut sugar has a lower glycemic index than refined sugar.

While coconut sugar is less processed than regular table sugar, it has the same amount of fructose and should still be enjoyed sparingly.

Feel the (sugar) rush: sugar alcohols



- Also known as polyols, sugar alcohols are a carbohydrate naturally found in fruits and vegetables.
- The bacteria that naturally live in your mouth can't ferment sugar alcohols, so they don't damage your teeth the way regular sugar does.
- The most popular sugar alcohols that are used as alternatives to sugar include erythritol, xylitol (safe for humans, not for pets) maltitol and sorbitol. ■

Sugar alcohols can appear in products from peanut butter to chewing gum and toothpastes.



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