

grin!



ADD A TWIST TO your Valentine's Day

What you should
know about
TEETH WHITENING

How viral food trends
**INFLUENCE YOUR
ORAL HEALTH**

**SOLUTIONS
AND SMILES**
crossword puzzle

winter 2023

in this issue of grin!



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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!



NEWS+RESEARCH
Stay hydrated, stay healthy
Your reusable water bottle helps you stay hydrated all day long — but it can also be home to many bacteria. Learn how to keep your bottle clean.



Set a good example by flossing daily

FUN+INSPIRATION
Make flossing fun for kids
Do your kids fuss when it's time to floss? Use the tips in this video to help keep their smiles clean and healthy.



Looking for reasons to smile?
Access the digital version anytime at grinmag.com or by scanning the QR code.



ON TOPIC WITH DR. DILL

Brushing and flossing may lower dementia risk

Joseph Dill, DDS, is Delta Dental's Chief Dental Officer. With more than 35 years of experience in the dental field, including 10 in private and public health practice and 20 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

Research continues to reveal connections between your oral and overall health. A recent review of multiple studies looked at potential links between cognitive health and periodontal disease. It focused on whether periodontal issues — gum disease, tooth loss, and bone loss, for example — could have a negative influence on an individual's long-term cognitive health.

Across many studies, it was found that poor periodontal health and tooth loss seem to increase the risk of both cognitive decline and dementia. However, further direct studies are still needed to draw firm conclusions. One thing we do know for certain is that good oral health is a critical part of one's overall health. The two can't be separated.

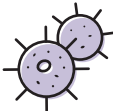
The link between a healthy smile and a healthy brain

So, what is the potential connection? Several factors have been suggested, including:



Inflammation

Although more research is needed, inflammation from periodontal disease may contribute to overall inflammation and cognitive impairment.



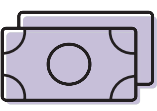
Bacteria

Bacteria from periodontal disease can travel from your mouth to other parts of your body, including your brain.



Missing teeth

Tooth loss can make chewing difficult and limit healthy food options, reducing the consumption of vitamins that support brain health.



Socioeconomic conditions

Those without access to dental care or unable to afford it are more likely to have periodontal issues, tooth loss, and other oral health problems.



Good oral health is critical for good overall health

Studies continue to reveal connections between your teeth, your gums, and your total health and well-being. Links have also been found between oral health and your risk for diabetes, heart disease, and more.

Maintain a healthy smile

The connection between oral health and dementia is relevant to many people, because almost half of adults over the age of 30 have some form of periodontal disease.¹ But you can do your part to protect your oral and overall health by brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, flossing daily, and visiting the dentist regularly for preventive care.

¹Periodontal Disease (n.d.) from <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/periodontal-disease.html>

MOUTH-FRIENDLY RECIPE

Dark chocolate gingerbread loaf

Gingerbread and winter go hand in hand. The warm scent of gingerbread wafting through the house is cozy and inviting. Seasonal spices, like cinnamon and clove, mix with unsweetened applesauce to create this irresistible, smile-friendly treat for anyone to enjoy! So, whether you're off to a holiday gathering, taking a treat to a neighbor, or just looking to make something sweet at home, this delicious dessert is the perfect option.

Ingredients:

For the loaf

- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup coconut sugar
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon cloves
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- 4 tablespoons dark chocolate chips, divided

For the chocolate-and-nuts glaze

- 4 ounces dark chocolate chips
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup coconut milk
- Mixed nuts, for topping

Directions:

- 1 Preheat oven to 350 F. Prepare a 9x5-inch baking pan with parchment paper.
- 2 Combine eggs, coconut sugar, applesauce, pumpkin, molasses, and olive oil and blend until smooth.
- 3 Sift together dry ingredients in a large bowl and then fold into the batter. Add 2 tablespoons of dark chocolate chips.
- 4 Transfer batter to the prepared baking pan and smooth into an even layer. Sprinkle the remaining 2 tablespoons of chocolate chips on top, pressing them slightly into the batter.
- 5 Bake for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
- 6 Let the loaf cool in the pan for 30 minutes. Remove loaf from pan and let sit an additional 60 minutes.
- 7 Meanwhile, melt the chocolate chips, cinnamon, and coconut milk together. Drizzle over cooled cake and gently press mixed nuts into chocolate drizzle.
- 8 Enjoy!



HEALTHY HIGHLIGHTS

Applesauce
is rich in calcium that helps build strong teeth.

Cinnamon
may prevent tooth decay and bad breath by destroying oral bacteria.

Dark chocolate
contains polyphenols, which may protect against oral diseases.

Your winter travel guide

Brrr ... It's getting chilly. This usually marks a popular time for travel. Whether you're visiting family and friends nearby or jetting off to sandy beaches, here are some tips to keep up your dental hygiene habits while on the road — or in the air.



1

Keep your toothbrush dry

Don't pack a wet toothbrush. Wet environments can become breeding grounds for bacteria. Shake off excess water after brushing and let your toothbrush air dry.



PRO TIP: Pick a toothbrush holder with ventilation. And don't forget to clean it between uses!



2

A travel dental kit is your smile's best friend

Don't leave home without it! Your travel dental kit should include a toothbrush, fluoride toothpaste, floss, lip balm with at least SPF 30, and — for extra fresh breath — some sugar-free gum. Keep your kit handy; you never know when a breath-freshening moment will strike!



PRO TIP: Be sure to pack your other oral necessities, like a night guard or retainer.



3

Check the water quality

If you're traveling abroad this holiday season, do your research. Make sure you can trust the tap water — and stick with bottled water if quality is a concern.



PRO TIP: If you can't drink it, don't brush your teeth with it. Instead, use bottled water.



4

Pack a water bottle

Having your own water bottle is a game-changer when traveling. Staying hydrated helps keep your teeth healthy and your energy up. Plus, sipping on water shields your teeth against cavities by washing away sugar and debris from your favorite holiday treats, like grandma's famous cookies. So, fill up that bottle and keep it close. Your teeth will thank you for it.



PRO TIP: Reduce the spread of bacteria by washing your water bottle once a day.



5

Know your dental network

If you're unsure about your dental coverage, it's time to get acquainted! Knowing how to find an in-network dentist is important — especially when traveling — to maximize savings. If you need a dentist while traveling, make sure to check whether they are in-network.



PRO TIP: With Delta Dental, it's easy. Visit deltadental.com to see if a dentist is in-network.

Adding these dental tips to your travel plans will help ensure a trip free of dental dilemmas. Pack wisely, travel safely, and show off your healthy smile.

Readers ask, we answer

Juile asks:
“How can I protect my smile from cold weather?”



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

Fresh snow and brisk air can create a scenic winter wonderland, but chilly temperatures can also cause oral health issues. Here are the most common dental problems in the winter and ways you can protect your smile this season.

PROBLEM #1:

Canker and cold sores



For many, cold weather can trigger painful canker sores or cold sores. Canker sores are shallow ulcers inside the mouth, while cold sores are blisters that usually appear outside the mouth.

THE SOLUTION:

Give it time and avoid hot and spicy food

For both canker and cold sores, avoid hot and spicy foods, which can increase the discomfort.

To speed up the healing process, try swishing lukewarm saltwater when you have a canker sore. For cold sores, use over-the-counter creams. If that doesn't work for you, talk to your physician about a prescription solution.

PROBLEM #2:

Chapped lips



The chilly breeze can strip away your lips' natural moisture, leaving them parched and cracked.

THE SOLUTION:

Keep your lip balm close

When temperatures drop, it's time to regularly apply lip balm — and make sure it's one that contains an SPF of at least 30. This will help prevent chapped lips. The SPF will also protect you against harmful sun rays. Believe it or not, sun rays can still cause damage in the winter.

Whether you're sledding, shoveling, or simply taking a walk in cold winter air, a chilly breeze can strip away your lips' natural moisture — leaving them parched and cracked.

PROBLEM #3:

Sensitive teeth



Do you experience tooth sensitivity with cold foods or drinks? Cold air — like cold foods and drinks — can also cause discomfort if you have sensitive teeth. There are several reasons this could be the case: worn tooth enamel, exposed roots due to abrasion, teeth grinding, or gum disease are a few.

THE SOLUTION:

Visit your dentist to determine the cause of the sensitivity

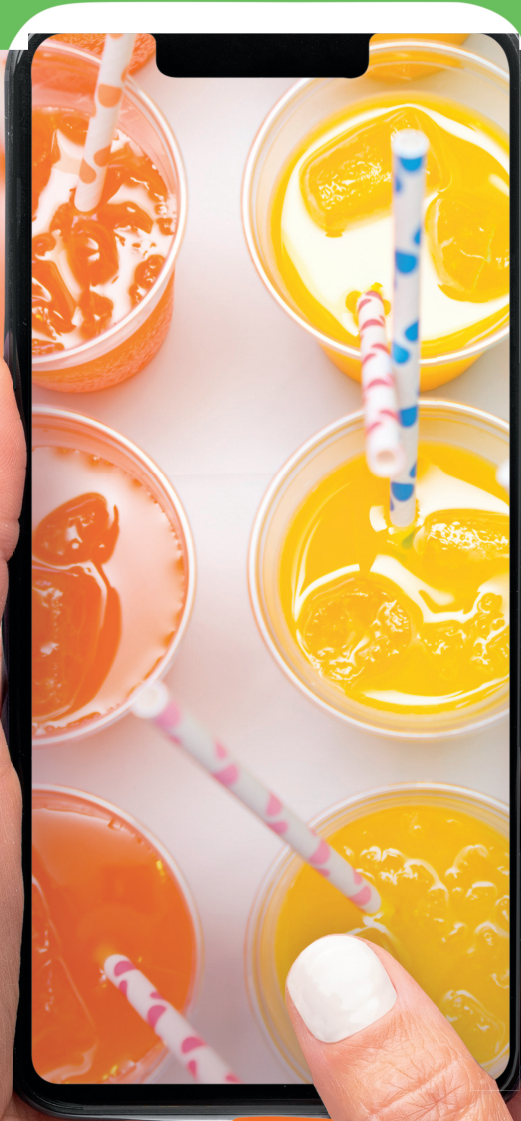
Don't let your discomfort continue — seek expert advice. Book an appointment with your dentist. They can pinpoint the cause and might recommend solutions like desensitizing toothpaste, better oral care, or other solutions that can help reduce symptoms.

Be vigilant about your oral health this season. That way, you can enjoy winter's charm without compromising your smile. Stay warm and keep smiling!

How viral food trends

INFLUENCE YOUR ORAL HEALTH

You can add some creativity to your plate with food trends from social media — just make sure they're also healthy for your smile. Whether it's a brand-new creative recipe or simply combining a few unexpected foods, you can find a video of people cooking or consuming almost anything.



VIRAL FOOD TREND: nature's cereal



What is it?
Coconut water, ice, and fresh berries mixed in a bowl

This trend certainly offers some good-for-you nutrition — berries provide vitamin C to support healthy gums, and coconut water has potassium that helps your teeth and bones use calcium more efficiently.

Is it smile friendly?
As long as you don't chew the ice, which can chip your teeth, damage your enamel, or loosen fillings and crowns. Or you can just leave out the ice and enjoy fresh fruit mixed in coconut water.

VIRAL FOOD TREND: frozen yogurt bark



What is it?
Yogurt mixed with honey, vanilla, chopped nuts, and fresh fruit, then frozen until firm

This trend can provide quality nutrition in a crisp, tasty package. The yogurt provides calcium for strong bones and teeth, and protein to help build and repair muscle. You'll also receive vitamins from the fruit and fiber from the chopped nuts.

Is it smile friendly?
If you don't overdo it, the nutrition in this trend can benefit your oral health. Just use a low-sugar yogurt and watch out for the honey, which is high in sugar and sticks to your teeth. Make sure you wash it down with water.

VIRAL FOOD TREND: fruit leather ice cream



What is it?
Your favorite ice cream wrapped in a fruit leather

While you can enjoy treats in moderation, be careful with this one. Ice cream can be high in sugar and fat, while fruit leather has a high sugar content (even options that also contain vitamins). Fruit leather can also stick to your teeth and contribute to a bacteria-friendly environment that leads to cavities and tooth decay.

Is it smile friendly?
We don't recommend you eat this one regularly. For a healthier sweet treat, try the frozen yogurt bark instead.

Continued from page 9



VIRAL FOOD TREND: flavored water

What is it?
Water mixed with another ingredient, usually a flavored powder, liquid sweetener, or fresh fruit

Drinking more water is always great! Staying hydrated offers benefits from head to toe — everything from a healthier heart and brain to reduced risk for headaches and dry mouth.

Is it smile friendly?
Yes, but only if you use healthy ingredients instead of overly acidic or sugary additives that can wear down tooth enamel or lead to tooth decay. For a delicious and refreshing way to hydrate and support your oral and overall health, we recommend refrigerated water with fruits and flavorings (like green apple slices and cinnamon sticks) in a pitcher overnight. If you want to spice it up even more, research a few infused water recipes that still use fresh, natural ingredients.



VIRAL FOOD TREND: tofu pizza waffles

What is it?
Extra-firm tofu cooked in a waffle maker until crispy, topped with cheese, pizza sauce, and veggies, and finished in the oven

“Tofu pizza waffle” may be a strange combination of words, but it can be a crispy, melty — and healthy — treat. The key is to pick the right toppings — like bell peppers, which are rich in vitamin C, or shiitake mushrooms, which help fight bacteria that contribute to tooth decay. The tofu is gluten-free and high in protein and calcium.

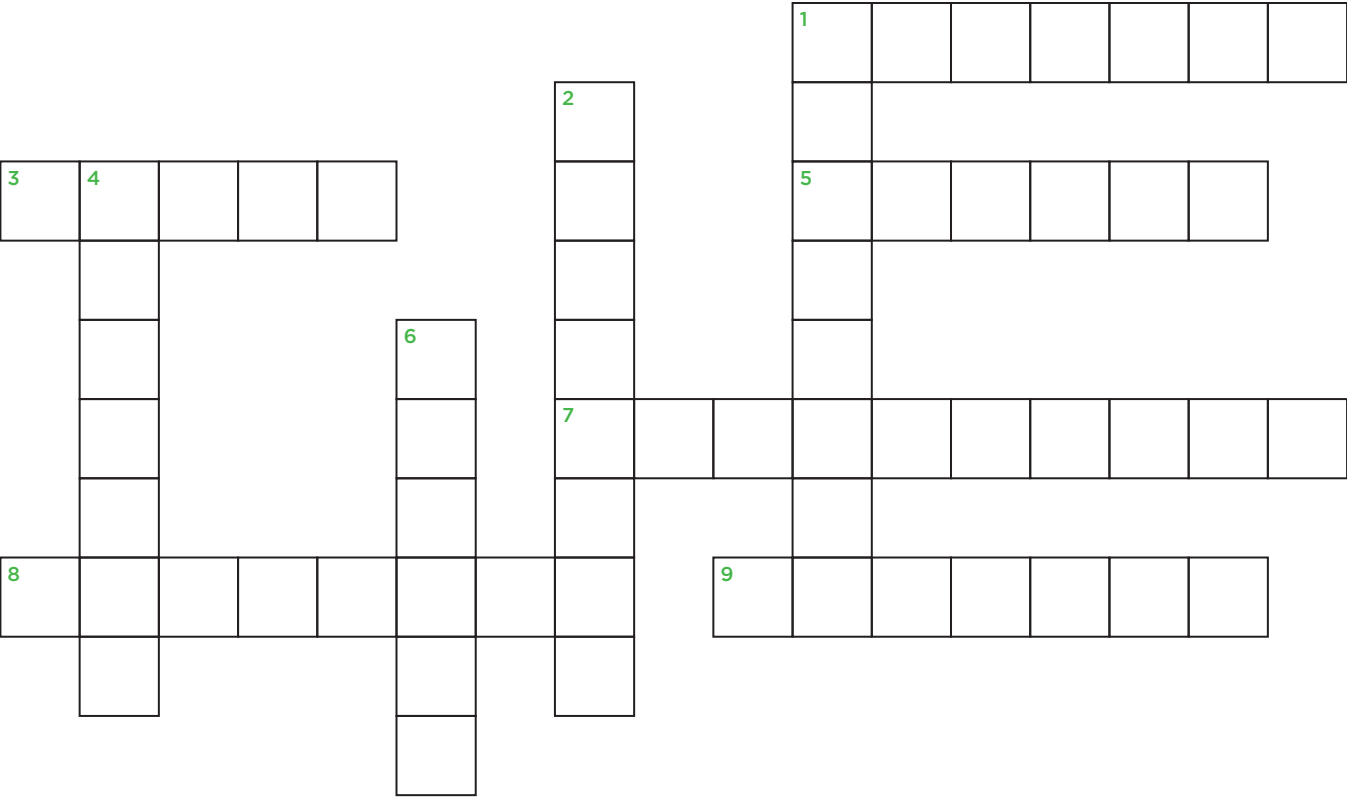
Is it smile friendly?
As long as you choose healthy toppings, give this one a try! Just go easy on the pizza sauce. As an acidic food, it’s not as smile friendly.

Internet fads are interesting to explore but they aren’t always in your best interest. Before you whip up a recipe that you find on social media, research the ingredients to make sure it’s good for your oral and overall health.



Solutions and smiles crossword puzzle

Crossword puzzles are more than an entertaining way to pass the time — studies have shown that they can help boost memory and decrease risk of developing cognitive issues such as Alzheimer’s and dementia. Answer the questions below to stimulate your brain. Along the way, you’ll learn more about protecting your oral and cognitive health.



ACROSS

- 1 Visit this person regularly to protect your smile
- 3 _____ games are another way to stimulate your brain
- 5 Completing crossword puzzles can boost your _____
- 7 Put toothpaste on your _____ to clean your teeth twice daily
- 8 Make sure your toothpaste includes this key ingredient
- 9 A mineral (often found in dairy products) that is important for strong bones and teeth

DOWN

- 1 Keeping your mind active with reading, writing, and puzzles will reduce your risk for _____
- 2 Brush twice and floss once daily to reduce your risk of _____
- 4 Brushing, flossing, and engaging your brain are all important parts of your _____ health
- 6 Stay physically and mentally _____ to support your cognitive and overall health

Stay mentally active

If crossword puzzles aren’t for you, there are many activities that can benefit your cognitive health in a similar way. Reading, writing, board games, and volunteering are just a few fun ways to boost brain activity.



ADD A
TWIST TO
your
Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day typically involves roses, chocolates, and candlelit dinners. But it's time to change it up. This year let's make oral health the theme of the day and celebrate with a smile. Here are some ways you can weave oral health into your Valentine's Day.



Valentine's Day isn't just for couples. Try these tips for your valentine, whether they're a significant other, friend, or family member this year!



Love notes with a dental flair

Start your Valentine's Day on a unique note — literally. Write a love note that emphasizes smiles. Recall a time when your valentine's laughter brightened a gloomy day or when a shared joke made both of you laugh. Add a touch of humor by sprinkling in a dental pun or two. Need inspiration? Here are a few to get you started:

- You're the toothpaste to my toothbrush; we just go together.
- You're the reason for my smile.
- Your smile is the best gift I can receive.
- My dentist said to avoid sweets, but I can't get enough of you.



Toast with a tart cherry mocktail

Instead of clinking glasses filled with sugary concoctions, opt for a delightful mocktail made of tart cherry juice. It's not just a treat for the taste buds; it's also loaded with antioxidants and calcium that are essential for good oral health. Blend the tart cherry juice with sparkling water and finish with a cherry on top. Here's a toast to days filled with love and nights illuminated by your smiles!



A gift that matters: Oral health kits

Move over traditional chocolates and roses. It's time to gift something different this year, something that enhances the health and well-being of your valentine. Put together a personalized oral health kit. Combine your valentine's favorite fluoride toothpaste, a toothbrush in their favorite color, dental floss, and the tastiest sugar-free gum for the perfect oral health kit. For those wanting to add something bigger to the mix, consider including a water flosser or an electric toothbrush. Wait to see your valentine's toothy grin when they open the gift!

Continued from page 13



Plan an evening of smiles

For the entire evening, celebrate the moments and activities that bring out genuine smiles and laughter. Whether it's watching a hilarious movie or having a spirited game night, choose activities that you both love. The goal is to ensure that by the end of the night, your faces will hurt from all the smiling.



Indulge in teeth-friendly treats

Take a healthier route this year without compromising taste. Opt for dark chocolate, which contains less sugar than milk or white chocolate, and has important antioxidants. Strawberries, which are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, also pair perfectly with any Valentine's Day evening, and they can satisfy your sweet tooth.



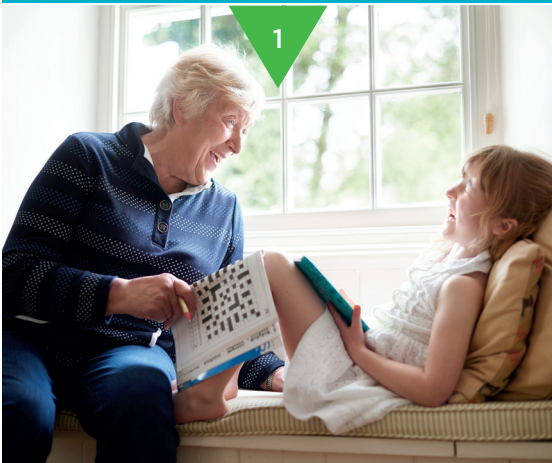
Create a "Smile Playlist"

Music is powerful — it evokes emotions, memories, and yes, smiles. Spend time curating a playlist of songs that make you smile and share it with your valentine. Then have them do the same.



This year, plan a day of shared laughs, sweet sips, and the promise of many more smiles together. Happy Valentine's Day!

Your WINTER smile list



- 1 Work on a crossword to strengthen your brain. Check out the one on page 11.
- 2 Visit an aquarium and relax watching the underwater world.
- 3 Pull on those silly shoes and bowl a strike.
- 4 Camp out inside under an old-fashioned blanket fort.
- 5 Enjoy a pajama day — guilt free!
- 6 Donate any extra blankets or coats to keep someone in need warm.
- 7 Taste the flavors of winter. Check out the dessert on page 5.
- 8 Gather family around the table with a favorite comfort food.
- 9 Create a vision board of New Year inspiration.
- 10 Cut out paper snowflakes to create a winter wonderland inside.



////////////////// DENTAL TREND SPOTLIGHT ////////////////////

Taping your mouth while sleeping: Is the silence worth the risk?

We get it — snoring can rob you or your loved one of much-needed rest. And when we don't get to recharge, we can become desperate for some relief. The latest internet trend suggests taping your mouth shut will silence snoring.

The theory behind this trend is simple

Keeping your mouth closed will force you to breathe through your nose and eliminate snoring. There are a lot of negative side effects that can come from mouth breathing, including:

 **Dry mouth**

 **Cavities**

 **Gum disease**

 **Bad breath**

Unlike breathing from your mouth, nose breathing filters dust and harmful allergens. While nose breathing may be the healthier alternative to mouth breathing and does help mitigate snoring, there's a big "BUT" here. To date, all the reported benefits of mouth taping have not been extensively researched, so side effects have not yet been fully studied. There are quite a few concerning health risks that are associated with the trend, including lip and skin irritation, disrupted sleep, and anxiety. It's even been found to block airways when sleeping.

Alternatives to mouth taping



Change your sleeping position: If you're used to sleeping on your back, try sleeping on your side instead.



Treat your allergies: If you have allergies, work with your physician to control symptoms. You might find that you can breathe a lot easier once your nose is no longer congested.



Maintain a healthy weight: Weight gain, especially around the neck, can put pressure on your airway, causing it to collapse and lead to snoring.



Talk to your physician: If snoring is keeping you up at night, make sure you or your loved ones talk to a physician. There are many safe ways to treat snoring.

Our verdict: In a world of quick fixes and online hacks, it's tempting to reach for that roll of tape. But remember, mouth-taping comes with risks. If snoring is disrupting your sleep, it might be time to consult a medical professional who can provide safe and effective solutions. Sleep soundly and always think twice before following the latest trend.

Answers to common questions about dental benefits

Everyone has a different level of knowledge of their dental benefits. To make sure you're making the most of your plan (or using it in the first place!), let's address a few common questions.



QUESTION: What do dental benefits cover?

ANSWER: Most dental plans place an emphasis on preventive coverage and sharing of costs. They usually cover:

- 100% of routine preventive and diagnostic care such as cleanings, x-rays, and exams
- 80% of basic procedures such as fillings, root canals, and tooth extractions
- 50% of major procedures such as crowns, bridges, and implants

Depending on your plan, select procedures, cosmetic procedures such as teeth whitening, and certain pre-existing conditions may not be covered.

82% of adults agree that having dental benefits is **ESSENTIAL TO PROTECTING ORAL AND OVERALL HEALTH.**¹



QUESTION: How do I know if a dentist is covered by my plan?

ANSWER: You can easily locate an in-network dentist near you on Delta Dental's website (deltadental.com) or mobile app. You'll want to stay in-network to maximize your benefits, savings, and convenience! This is because in-network dentists agree to charge discounted rates for their services, and they file claims and any other paperwork for you.

QUESTION: Can you explain some of the terminology used in my plan?

ANSWER: Let's review a few terms that are helpful to know:

- **Deductible:** A dollar amount you must pay toward covered services before Delta Dental's benefits are paid.
- **Coinsurance:** The percentage of the costs of services paid by you. For example, a benefit that is paid at 80% by the plan creates a 20% coinsurance obligation for you.
- **Annual maximum benefit:** The total dollar amount that a plan will pay for dental care for an individual member or family member (under a family plan) for a specified benefit period, typically a calendar year.
- **Lifetime maximum benefit:** The maximum amount a plan will pay over the course of a lifetime. It may apply to an individual or a family and typically applies to specific treatments such as orthodontic treatment.

Want to learn more about your dental plan?
Delta Dental members can review full plan details by logging into deltadental.com.



6 things you should know about
TEETH WHITENING

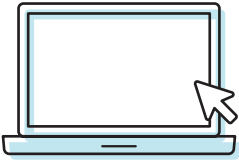
Are you interested in teeth whitening? There are so many over-the-counter products, online trends, and treatment options that it can be hard to know what to choose. Here are five tips that can help.

1

Believe your dentist, not what you read online

Always consult your dentist before you begin any whitening treatment! The internet can be a great place for learning and discovery, but some trends offer no real benefits or cause actual harm.

For example, one social media fad saw users making a homemade whitening mix with mouthwash, hydrogen peroxide, and baking soda. But this is risky — the wrong combination could dissolve your tooth enamel or burn your gums.



2

Treatments from your dentist are stronger (and last longer)

Your dentist will use a higher concentration whitening agent than at-home options. The treatment will typically be done over multiple short in-office sessions, or even at home with their guidance, but the procedure type and the amount of time needed will vary based on your personal oral health history. Before beginning treatment, your dentist will discuss options with you and perform a thorough examination.



3

There are many at-home options

Most over-the-counter whitening products will use hydrogen peroxide or carbamide peroxide, which are natural bleaching agents, to break down molecules that make up stains and discoloration. Three common products are whitening strips, LED whitening kits, and whitening toothpaste.

In general, these at-home treatments can be effective when the manufacturer's instructions are followed. They are also more affordable than in-office options because teeth whitening typically is not covered by dental plans.



4

Whitening toothpastes aren't all the same

Many toothpastes claim to whiten teeth, and this can be an option for those who prefer to avoid a full whitening treatment. You won't see the same results as a treatment, but you may notice a difference if you choose the right product.

- Fluoride toothpaste with a whitening agent is the best choice.
- Charcoal toothpaste is so abrasive that it can irritate or damage your teeth and gums.
- Purple toothpaste doesn't cause damage, but it also doesn't truly whiten your teeth. Your teeth simply appear whiter temporarily because the light purple color from the toothpaste helps neutralize yellow tones.



5

Side effects are common, but temporary

Whether you choose to whiten your teeth at the dentist's office or with an at-home product, you can expect some minor side effects such as increased sensitivity to hot, cold, touch and pressure, or inflammation of the gums.

Tooth sensitivity from whitening usually fades in the days after you finish treatment. If you experience lasting or unexpected discomfort in your teeth or gums, stop treatment and consult your dentist immediately.



6

Whitening isn't for everyone

Teeth whitening is most useful for people with yellow or orange spotting that comes from natural aging or stains from dark foods and drinks (such as berries, tea, or coffee). In general, whitening does not work on gray teeth, antibiotic-stained teeth, dental crowns, fillings, bridges, veneers, and bonded teeth.



With so many options and variables involved with teeth whitening, it's important to check with your dentist before you begin any treatment. They'll review your personal oral health history and help make sure it's safe and effective for you.



DELTA DENTAL INSTITUTE

2022 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

Each year, Delta Dental invests in communities across the country to help put all of us on a path toward a healthier and more equitable tomorrow. Our Community Impact Report tells the story of how Delta Dental elevated the oral health and overall health in our four focus areas in 2022.

Expanding access to care



8.2 million people

ACHIEVED BETTER ORAL HEALTH

through our dental treatment and prevention programs

Advancing health equity



\$7.5 million

**INVESTED IN TOMORROW'S
ORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE**

to better reflect the diversity of communities



11.6 million people

REACHED THROUGH

oral health education and public
awareness campaigns

Building resilient communities



\$2.9 million

DISTRIBUTED TOWARD

disaster relief and related activities



24,000 hours

OF EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER TIME

to support communities across the country

Innovating for a healthier tomorrow



\$2.2 million

**INVESTED IN MEDICAL-DENTAL
INTEGRATION EFFORTS**

to reduce barriers to care

At Delta Dental, we are committed to demonstrating unwavering support to advance oral and overall health. Learn more and read the full report at cir.deltadental.com.