

# grin!®

## Play for your HAPPINESS + HEALTH

Nutritious alternatives to  
foods you crave

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How can I feel more  
confident on video calls?

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Easy ways to achieve a  
healthier smile and planet



in this issue of  
**grin!**

WELLNESS + NUTRITION



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**Nutritious alternatives to foods you crave**

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**grin!** more

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



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NEWS + RESEARCH



**Relief for short-term dental discomfort**

Your dentist may recommend medication to relieve discomfort after some dental procedures. Find out which option may be the most effective for pain relief.

WELLNESS + NUTRITION



**Stress less and smile more with paid time off**

Taking some much-needed time away from work can give you plenty of reasons to smile. And it can even make that smile healthier. See the many benefits of paid time off.

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## On topic with Dr. Dill: Are silver fillings safe?

Dental amalgam fillings are one of the oldest and most common ways to fill a cavity. They're sometimes called "silver fillings" because of their metallic color.

Amalgam fillings are durable and long-lasting. They are made of mercury, silver, copper and tin, and sometimes include a small amount of other metals such as zinc and indium. Amalgam fillings generally cost less than tooth-colored composite fillings, which are made with a type of plastic resin and glass.



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.

### USE OF SILVER FILLINGS

150  
YEARS  
of history

10s of millions  
FILLINGS PLACED  
each year

About half of dental amalgam is liquid mercury, which is used to bind the metal particles together into a hard, strong filling. Over time, amalgams can release a very low level of mercury vapor, but extensive research shows amalgam fillings are safe and not harmful to the health of the large majority of people. This has been verified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization and American Dental Association. The FDA also does not recommend removing existing silver fillings, unless medically necessary.

Certain groups who may face greater health risks from exposure to even small amounts of mercury should avoid amalgam if possible, according to the FDA. These include women who are pregnant or nursing; children under 6; people with impaired kidney function or neurological diseases such as multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease or Parkinson's disease; and those allergic to mercury or other metals in amalgam.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all types of dental fillings. Check with your dentist about which type of filling is best for your needs and situation. Prevent tooth decay and the need for fillings in the first place by brushing and flossing daily, eating a balanced diet, limiting sugar and visiting the dentist regularly. ■

## Mouth-friendly recipe: beet hummus

Not only will this bright and vibrant-colored hummus bring a smile to your face, but it will also help support healthy teeth and bones! Beets and chickpeas mingle with a dash of cumin and coriander for a slightly sweet hummus that's sure to become a go-to appetizer or snack. Serve with fresh mouth-friendly veggies like carrots, celery, cucumber and radishes.

### Ingredients:

2 small red beets  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 garlic cloves  
15 ounces cooked chickpeas,  
drained and rinsed  
2 tablespoons tahini  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
2-3 tablespoons warm water  
½ teaspoon ground cumin  
½ teaspoon coriander  
Sea salt and ground black  
pepper, to taste

### Directions:

- ① Preheat oven to 400 F.
- ② Drizzle beets with olive oil. Wrap beets and garlic cloves in foil and place on a baking sheet.
- ③ Roast beets for 30 to 40 minutes or until tender.
- ④ After removing pan from oven, let beets sit until cool enough to handle. Peel beet skin under running water, then chop into smaller pieces.
- ⑤ Place beets in a blender with garlic, chickpeas, tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, water, cumin and coriander. Blend until smooth or your preferred consistency.
- ⑥ Chill hummus in the refrigerator. Garnish with parsley, pine nuts or sesame seeds if desired.
- ⑦ Serve as a dip with whole-wheat pita bread or fresh veggies. Enjoy! ■



**Beets**  
are rich with folate  
that helps prevent  
gum disease.

**Chickpeas**  
provide plenty of  
calcium for strong  
teeth and bones.

**Fresh garlic**  
can reduce bacteria  
in your mouth.

# Easy ways to achieve a healthier smile and planet



### Save energy with your oral health care routine

- Use daylight when brushing and flossing in the morning
- Switch to long-lasting LED lightbulbs
- Unplug your electric toothbrush charger when not in use

**200+**  
**gallons**  
**OF WATER IS WASTED**  
each month by running the water while you brush!



### Go paperless with your dental coverage and treatment

- Opt-in to electronic messages from your dental benefits carrier
- Ask your dentist and employer about paperless options



### Drink water from a reusable bottle

- Reduces the amount of oil used for plastic production
- Cuts down on the billions of plastic bottles that end up in landfills every year



### Save water when you brush

- Wet your toothbrush and then turn off the water until you're ready to rinse
- Use a cup to limit the amount of water used to rinse your mouth and toothbrush



### Make a healthy meal plan to reduce food waste

- Plan meals and snacks a week at a time
- Buy only what you need
- Maintain a low-sugar, well-balanced diet to avoid oral diseases

It's easy to incorporate simple changes to save energy and reduce waste. You'll not only help the planet, you'll also help your smile by eating a well-balanced diet, hydrating and maintaining a regular oral health care routine. ■

## Readers ask, we answer

*Jimmy asks:*  
"How can I feel more confident on video calls?"



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

Hi, Jimmy! Thanks to technology, we're now able to easily stay connected through video calls. Not only does this let you quickly chat when you can't meet in person, but it can also provide the face-to-face interaction you miss with a call, text or email.

Being up close with the camera could make you more aware of your appearance. If you are looking for ways to enhance your smile, here are some methods that work and ones that don't.



- ✓ **Drink water** while enjoying coffee, tea, red wine and other beverages that can stain your teeth. Rinse shortly afterward.
- ✓ **Practice preventive care** to keep your smile bright and avoid oral and overall health issues. Brush twice and floss once a day. Visit the dentist regularly.
- ✓ **Talk with your dentist** about the best and safest way to whiten or straighten your teeth. If you're interested in orthodontics, check to see what your dental plan covers.
- ✓ **Use camera tricks** to make you feel more confident. Put your camera at eye-level and use soft lighting on your face, with no bright lights in the background. Try wearing an off-white shirt (instead of bright white) to make your teeth appear whiter.
- ✓ **Look in the mirror** before your next video chat to check for food stuck between your teeth.

- ✗ **Avoid smoking**, which can discolor your teeth and cause your gums to recede.
- ✗ **Don't try the recent trend** of using a nail file to reshape your teeth, even though you or your kids may see it online. This removes protective tooth enamel and increases your risk of cavities, tooth sensitivity and nerve damage. Ask your dentist if your teeth can be safely reshaped.
- ✗ **Skip DIY and charcoal toothpastes**, which may not always contain fluoride that keeps your teeth strong and protects against cavities. Ingredients such as charcoal and baking soda are abrasive and can damage your enamel.
- ✗ **Don't attempt to straighten your teeth on your own.** Homemade braces can cause extensive damage to your teeth and gums that can be costly and time-consuming to fix.

Show off your smile! By sticking to oral health care methods that work and avoiding ones that don't, you can feel confident during your next video call. ■

<sup>1</sup>United States Environmental Protection Agency



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## Nutritious alternatives TO FOODS YOU CRAVE

Nearly everyone has experienced a craving for something sweet, salty or crunchy. While these cravings are natural, they may make you reach for not-so-healthy foods and drinks that are high in carbs, fat and sugar.

Starchy and sugary foods can stick to your teeth and cause bacteria in your mouth to become more acidic, leading to tooth decay. Here are some ways to satisfy those cravings while protecting your oral health.

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## CRAVING SOMETHING SWEET?

Reach for fresh fruit like berries and apple slices, which can naturally provide you the sweet taste you're longing for. Whip together a parfait or smoothie using some fresh fruit and yogurt. If you're treating yourself to some candy, choose plain dark chocolate that can melt quickly instead of caramel, hard candies or gummies that can stick to your teeth and increase your chance of cavities.



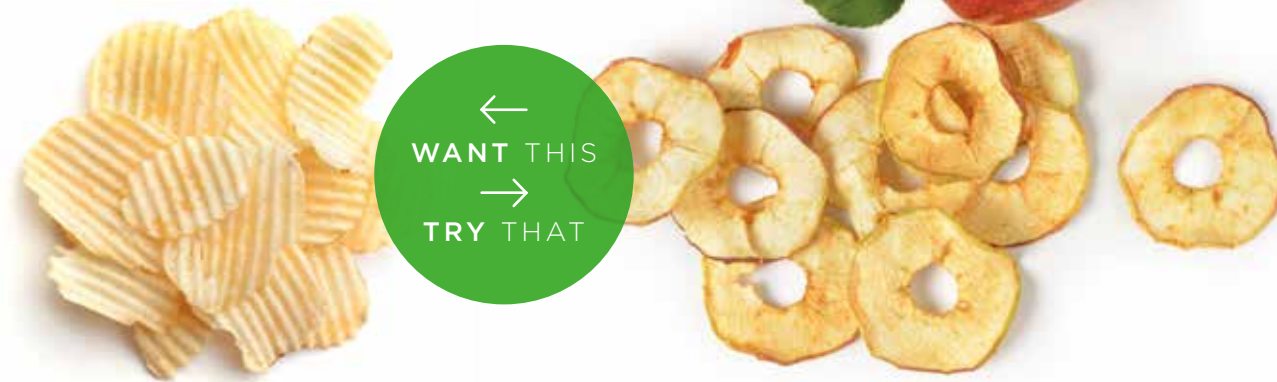
## CRAVING SOMETHING SALTY?

Grab a handful of nuts such as almonds, cashews and peanuts, which are packed with calcium and can help your teeth and gums stay healthy. Or if you're longing for french fries, steam a bag of edamame and sprinkle with sea salt. This high-protein snack can satisfy that salty craving with less fat and starch.



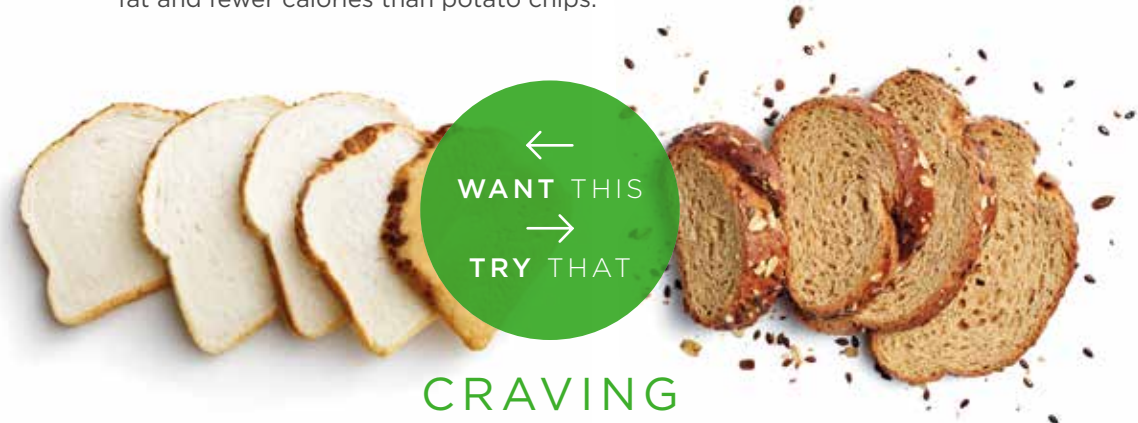
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## CRAVING SOMETHING CRUNCHY?

Try some carrot or celery sticks paired with the beet hummus recipe on page 5. Munching on healthy fruits and veggies increases saliva flow and helps clean your teeth. If nothing but chips will do, try healthier baked alternatives made with apples, sweet potatoes or kale, which have less fat and fewer calories than potato chips.



## CRAVING CARBS?

Choose whole grains instead of white bread and rice, which can stick to your teeth and cause cavities. Try making family-favorite mac and cheese with whole-grain pasta. Or enjoy some kidney, lima, pinto or black beans — packed with protein and fiber, they'll keep you feeling full longer than other types of carbs.

**Set yourself up for success when cravings hit.** Stock your pantry and prepare your meals and snacks in advance. By making it easy to grab healthy foods, you will increase your chance of success. ■

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## Test your teeth and bone strength



How much emphasis do you put on your oral health?

- (A) I brush at least twice a day, floss daily and visit my dentist regularly. (3 points)
- (B) I occasionally skip a brushing or flossing session and a dental appointment. (2 points)
- (C) My routine is sporadic and it's been more than a year since I've seen the dentist. (1 point)

Bone loss and tooth loss are linked. Osteoporosis — a weakening of the bones — can cause tooth loss when the jawbone becomes less dense.

Which answer best defines your diet?

- (A) I eat a balanced diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and dairy products. (3 points)
- (B) I sometimes eat too many sugary and starchy foods but still have a diet full of important nutrients. (2 points)
- (C) I rarely watch my diet or think about vitamins and minerals. (1 point)

For strong teeth and bones, look for calcium in dairy products, green leafy vegetables and more. Find vitamin D in eggs, fatty fish and fortified products.

How would you characterize your level of activity?

- (A) I get at least 30 minutes of exercise almost every day. (3 points)
- (B) I get some exercise at least a couple of times a week. (2 points)
- (C) I rarely exercise. (1 point)

Bones become stronger with exercise. Research also suggests regular exercise can lower your risk of gum disease.<sup>1</sup>

How would you describe your weight?

- (A) I maintain a healthy weight. (3 points)
- (B) I am slightly underweight or overweight. (2 points)
- (C) I am several pounds underweight or overweight. (1 point)

Low body weight often leads to lower bone density, while high body weight increases the risk of bone fracture.

Have you used tobacco and/or drank alcohol?

- (A) I have avoided tobacco and limited alcohol. (3 points)
- (B) I sometimes use(d) tobacco and/or consume(d) an average of one or more drinks per day. (2 points)
- (C) I smoke(d) daily and/or consume(d) alcohol regularly. (1 point)

Tobacco can cause oral cancer and a higher risk of osteoporosis. Alcohol is a risk factor for tooth loss and osteoporosis.

Add up your points to see where you land on the teeth and bone strength scale:

14-15 points **Superhuman**  
Congratulations! You're doing all you can to maintain strong teeth and bones.

10-13 points **Strong**  
You're doing well in most areas but could make small changes for healthier teeth and bones.

5-9 points **Vulnerable**  
You may be at risk for tooth and/or bone density loss. But it's never too late to develop healthy new habits.

Additional factors such as age, gender, osteoporosis and other health conditions can influence the strength of your bones and teeth. No matter your ranking, talk to your dentist and physician about maintaining or improving your health. ■



# Play for your HAPPINESS + HEALTH

Getting up and moving has so many benefits for your health and well-being, no matter your age. Setting an example for your kids about the importance of exercise can help them develop a lifetime of good habits. Here are five ways to incorporate movement (and more fun!) into your family's routine.



## 1. GET MOVING DURING SCREEN TIME



Who says screen time has to be on the couch? Do an online yoga or aerobics class together. If your child likes video games, choose one that incorporates exercise. And during that next video chat, stand up to demonstrate what you're talking about. See page 7 for ways to feel more confident during those chats.

## 3. TURN A MUNDANE TRIP INTO AN ADVENTURE



If you need to go someplace that isn't too far away, why not walk or bike there instead of driving? Develop a new family tradition of daily walks. A walk can help everyone's physical and mental health — especially in the sunshine, which helps your body produce vitamin D for healthy bones. Don't forget to bring a water bottle to stay hydrated.

## 2. DEVOTE TIME EACH DAY TO PLAY



Spend some time together shooting hoops, kicking a soccer ball around and playing hide-and-go-seek or catch. Organize a family-style Olympics where everyone competes to see who can jump rope the longest or do the most jumping jacks. If playing could get a little rough, consider having your child wear a mouth guard to help protect their teeth.

## 4. MAKE ROUTINE TASKS MORE ENGAGING



Turn up the music and transform chore time into a dance party! Have you ever tried to dance while sweeping, dusting, cleaning a room or doing the dishes? Who can dance and clean the most in 15 minutes? It's a challenge that's sure to make your whole family smile.



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## 5. FIND WAYS TO GET OUTSIDE

Divide into teams and have a water balloon fight. Do a scavenger hunt or hula hoop contest. Make use of that swing set, or just run around in the backyard. Celebrate victories by jumping up and down to get your heart pumping.



## THERE ARE COUNTLESS BENEFITS OF ADDING MORE EXERCISE TO YOUR FAMILY'S DAY



**Makes you feel happier and less stressed.** This can help you avoid oral health problems such as teeth grinding and mouth sores.



**Increases your energy levels.** Getting up and moving can give you a boost of energy.



**Helps you maintain strong bones.** Exercise, along with a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, is key to healthy teeth and bones. Test your knowledge about teeth and bone strength with our quiz on page 11.



**Reduces your blood-sugar level.** Exercise helps keep sugar from building up in your body. That can reduce your risk of diabetes and gum disease.



**Improves your brain health and memory.** Getting your heart rate up increases the flow of blood and oxygen to your brain, which can help with learning and memory.

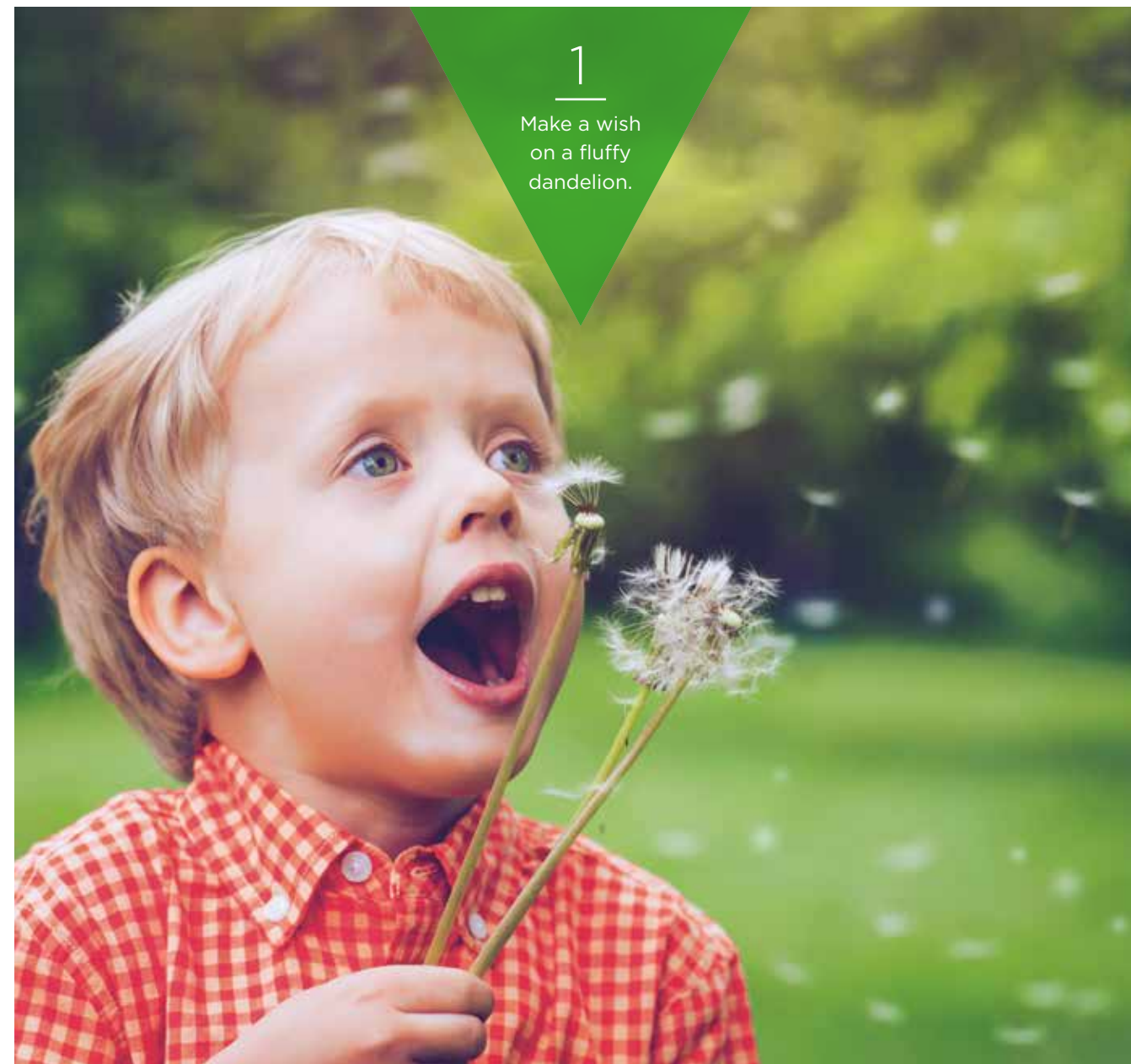


**Benefits your gum health.** Studies show regular exercise reduces inflammation. It can also reduce the risk of gum disease.<sup>1</sup>

By working more exercise into your daily routine, you're taking steps for better health and wellness for the entire family. ■

<sup>1</sup>American Academy of Periodontology

## Your spring smile list



- ② Enjoy a smile-friendly snack — try our beet hummus on page 5.
- ③ Pick up litter on your daily walk to keep your neighborhood clean. See pages 12-14 for other ways to move.
- ④ Peruse virtual backgrounds and find one that fits your style.
- ⑤ Turn up the tunes and enjoy an impromptu dance party in your living room.
- ⑥ Sit quietly and listen to the rain.
- ⑦ Paint rocks and leave them around town for others to discover.
- ⑧ Hang a windchime outside your window and wait for a gentle breeze.
- ⑨ Take a night hike with a flashlight and rediscover a familiar path.
- ⑩ Make a birdhouse and see who moves in. ■





## New health trend focuses on fasting

There's a new dieting trend joining the ranks of keto and clean eating. Intermittent fasting has quickly grown to the most popular diet for managing weight and improving health, practiced by as many as 10% of Americans.<sup>1</sup>

Its popularity is driven, in part, by its simplicity — the potential of losing weight and improving your health without preparing special meals or counting calories. This type of fasting puts restrictions on when you can eat, usually limiting food intake during a designated time frame. By fasting, your body burns through the calories from your last meal and starts burning fat.

### Potential health benefits

- Reducing calories will likely cause you to lose weight.
- Early studies show intermittent fasting can reduce inflammation<sup>2</sup> and potentially decrease the risk of diabetes, cancer, heart disease<sup>3</sup> and gum disease.<sup>4</sup>
- Intermittent fasting can also help the brain by improving both thinking and memory.<sup>5</sup>
- One study found that intermittent fasting can even lead to a longer life, leaner body and sharper mind.<sup>6</sup>

### Health considerations

- No matter what time you eat, it's important for your oral and overall health to maintain a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits, veggies, dairy and lean proteins. For tips on how to handle food cravings, see pages 8-10.
- Intermittent fasting can not only make you feel hungry and tired, but it may also cause you to feel sick. You may suffer from insomnia, nausea, headaches, dry mouth or acid reflux.
- Not eating for an extended period can increase cortisol, the stress hormone, which can spur problems such as teeth grinding and mouth sores.

**Our verdict:** Check with your physician before considering intermittent fasting or any other diet change. Remember that eating a well-balanced diet, exercising and getting enough sleep are always best for your oral and overall health. ■

<sup>1</sup>International Food Information Council survey

<sup>2</sup>Mayo Clinic

<sup>3</sup>Business Insider

<sup>4</sup>WebMD

<sup>5</sup>John Hopkins Medicine

<sup>6</sup>New England Journal of Medicine, John Hopkins Medicine

## New safety measures at the dental office



We've all done what's needed to keep ourselves healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. These extra steps include washing our hands more frequently, using sanitizer regularly and keeping our distance from one another to avoid spreading germs.

As we've made these adjustments to our everyday lives, dental offices have made similar changes to continue protecting patients.

The health of patients and sanitization of the dental office have always been priorities. Steps typically taken to ensure health and safety include:

- Cleaning and sterilizing dental tools like teeth scrapers, dental mirrors and suction devices after each use.
- Disposing of single-use items such as patient bibs, gauze, syringe needles and the rubber cups used to hold tooth polish.
- Disinfecting chairs, lights, handles, countertops and other surfaces before new patients enter the exam room.
- Washing hands and putting on new masks and gloves between patients.

Preventive checkups help keep your mouth and body healthy. It is important to continue to prioritize your oral health and maintain good oral hygiene habits. Contact your dentist to see what steps they have taken to maintain a safe environment. ■

During the pandemic, additional steps may be taken by dental offices to maintain safety, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



**Social distancing:** There may be fewer appointment times available to limit the number of people in the office. You may have to fill out paperwork online in advance, and you may be asked to wait in your car before your appointment.



**Screening:** You may have your temperature taken when you get to the dental office or be asked screening questions to ensure you aren't sick.



**Sanitation and protection:** You may be asked to wash your hands when you arrive. You may also be asked to wear a mask until your exam begins.



**Personal protective equipment:** Your dentist and dental office staff will likely wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE) such as goggles and face shields.



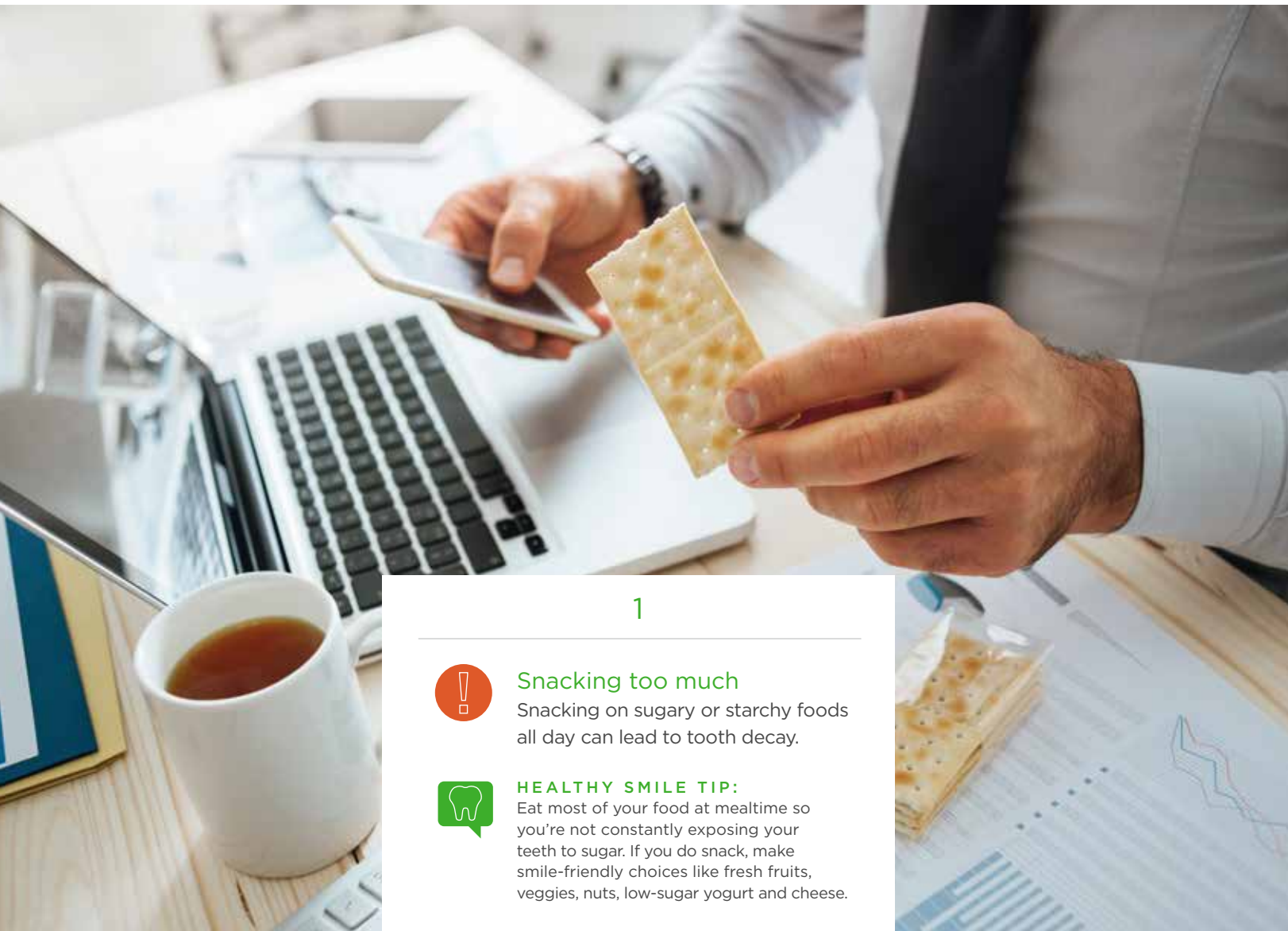
**Modified procedures:** Some dental procedures that create aerosols, such as teeth cleaning, polishing and suctioning, may have been modified to reduce airborne particles.





# 5 dental dangers on the job

Taking great care of your teeth means brushing and flossing at home and visiting your dentist regularly. But what you do on the job can also influence your smile.



1



### Snacking too much

Snacking on sugary or starchy foods all day can lead to tooth decay.



### HEALTHY SMILE TIP:

Eat most of your food at mealtime so you're not constantly exposing your teeth to sugar. If you do snack, make smile-friendly choices like fresh fruits, veggies, nuts, low-sugar yogurt and cheese.



2



### Getting stressed

Job stress can cause teeth grinding and clenching, gum disease and mouth sores.



### HEALTHY SMILE TIP:

De-stress by exercising, getting enough sleep and eating a balanced diet.



3



### Taking a smoke break

Smoking can lead to discolored teeth, bad breath, tooth loss and an increased risk of oral cancer.



### HEALTHY SMILE TIP:

Your job may allow for smoke breaks but avoid all tobacco, including vaping. Chat with co-workers over a coffee break or take a short walk instead.



4



### Waiting to treat dental injuries

Time is of the essence if your mouth is injured.



### HEALTHY SMILE TIP:

Make sure to learn what to do in the case of a dental emergency, such as a knocked out or chipped tooth, and see your dentist immediately if you suffer a mouth injury.



5



### Attending happy hour with co-workers

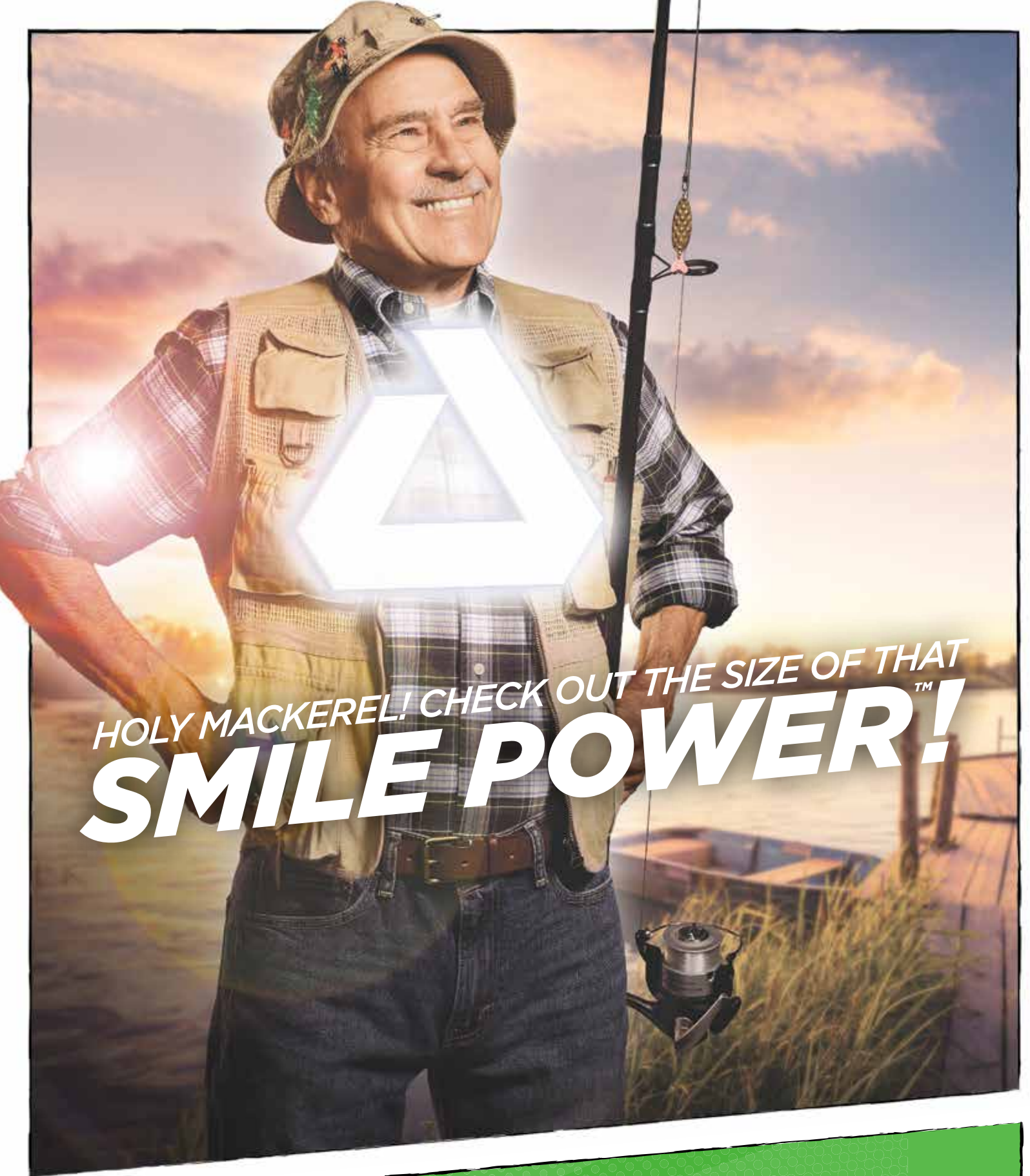
Alcohol is linked to oral cancer, gum disease, tooth decay and dry mouth. Plus, some alcohol is high in sugar.



### HEALTHY SMILE TIP:

Skip the after-work drinks, or just sip sparkling water or a nonalcoholic cocktail. Try getting together for morning tea or lunch instead. If you do drink alcohol, do so in moderation. ■





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