

# grin!®

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

fall  
2017  
volume 6, issue 3

teeth-whitening  
charcoal tablets  
and powder

**5** tips for  
getting toddlers  
to brush

how to have a healthy  
**HALLOWEEN PARTY**

updates in teeth tech







*A smile can say*  
**YOU LOOK  
AWFULLY FAMILIAR**

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smile power™

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## table of contents

- 4** on topic with dr. kohn:  
cavity-fighting liquid for kids
- 5** mouth-friendly recipe:  
pumpkin brownies
- 6** history of oral health:  
smiling in photographs
- 7** readers ask, we answer:  
bleeding gums while flossing
- 8** 5 tips for getting toddlers to brush
- 9** two-word answers
- 13** dental trend spotlight:  
teeth-whitening charcoal tablets  
and powder
- 14** updates in teeth tech
- 15** how pre-treatment estimates work
- 16** your fall smile list:  
10 to-do's that will make you grin



**10** feature article  
how to have a healthy  
**HALLOWEEN PARTY**





**on topic** with dr. kohn  
something old, something new:  
a cavity-fighting liquid makes a comeback

Getting a filling can be a scary proposition for toddlers and their parents, but unfortunately, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about a quarter of children ages 2 to 5 have tooth decay. In serious cases, children end up in the operating room because they are too young to sit still for the filling process. However, help is on the way in the form of silver diamine fluoride (SDF), an antimicrobial liquid that can be brushed on cavities to stop decay. The best part? No shots and no drilling! SDF is simply and painlessly dabbed into the cavity – the decay does not need to be removed – and takes just a few minutes. While SDF has been around for decades, it has one major drawback that caused it to fall out of favor: It turns the decay black. While this may not be a problem on back molars, black areas on front teeth can be unsightly. Still, SDF has seen a comeback among pediatric dentists in recent years because it’s an inexpensive way to buy some time for young children until they can cooperate for fillings and avoid general anesthesia and the operating room.

**Researchers are looking for ways to prevent the black stains, so we may see more widespread use of SDF in the future.**

Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Policy, Bill Kohn, DDS. Formerly the director of the Division of Oral Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Kohn has timely tips and valuable insights to share as our resident dental expert.



pumpkin brownies

*It wouldn't be fall without a pumpkin-flavored treat or two – and this one will satisfy your seasonal cravings without sacrificing your smile.*

ingredients:

- brownie layer**
- 1 ½ cups flour
  - ½ cup oatmeal
  - ½ cup cocoa powder
  - 1 cup pumpkin puree
  - 1 teaspoon baking powder
  - 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
  - ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
  - 1 egg
  - 2 tablespoons liquid stevia
  - 1 cup milk

- pumpkin layer**
- ½ cup flour
  - ½ cup pumpkin puree
  - ½ teaspoon cinnamon
  - 1 tablespoon liquid stevia
  - 1 tablespoon milk

- topping**
- 2 tablespoons dark chocolate chips

directions:

- 1 Preheat oven to 375°F.
- 2 Combine all the ingredients for the brownie layer in a large bowl and mix until well combined.
- 3 Combine the ingredients for the pumpkin layer in a medium bowl, stirring until combined.
- 4 Pour the brownie mixture into a greased 8x8 baking pan, distributing evenly.
- 5 Layer the pumpkin mixture on top, spreading it evenly over the brownie base.
- 6 Sprinkle chocolate chips on top.
- 7 Bake for 30 minutes. Cool for 30 minutes before slicing. Enjoy!



# HISTORY OF ORAL HEALTH: smiling in photographs

Though saying “cheese” for a picture is common today, smiling for photographs is a relatively recent trend.



1847

One of the earliest photos of a person smiling for the camera is a picture of officers in the Mexican-American war.



1905 - 2005

A study of high school yearbook photos taken during this time shows that women smile more for photos than men in any given decade.

1920s - 1930s

Smiling for photographs became the norm.



## DID YOU KNOW?

There may be several reasons for the lack of smiles in the past, including the long exposure times of early cameras and people hiding their poor dental health. Also, early photo sessions were a more formal affair, so people tended to pose as they would for an oil painting.

2017

Our survey<sup>1</sup> found that 73 percent of Americans are more attracted to someone who smiles often – something to consider when posting dating profile pics!



<sup>1</sup>Delta Dental Adult Oral Health & Well-Being Survey, 2017.



## readers ask, we answer

Melanie asks:

"My gums bleed a little when I floss. Is that normal?"

Hi, Melanie. The short answer: It depends.

The long answer: If you don't floss regularly, you can expect to experience a bit of pink in the sink. Long stretches between flossing sessions mean you likely have excess plaque, which can make your gums inflamed, also known as gingivitis. When you poke at them with floss or even brush a bit too hard, they may bleed. The good news is that if the bleeding is due to a sporadic flossing schedule, flossing on a regular basis – at least once a day – will help prevent inflamed gums, and thus, stop the bleeding. In fact, a study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* found that people who brushed and flossed daily experienced a 38 percent decrease in bleeding gums.

Another cause could be the type of floss you use or a rough flossing or brushing style. Switching floss or using a lighter touch may help resolve the problem.

If you've already ruled out the above possibilities but still experience daily or excessive bleeding, there could be a more serious culprit, including periodontitis (gum disease), which can cause damage to the bone and tissues that support teeth. Should this be the case, you will likely need treatment that goes beyond a simple cleaning.

Your dentist will be able to tell if you simply need to increase your flossing frequency or if something more serious is brewing, so be sure to bring it up at your next appointment.



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.



# 5 tips for getting toddlers to brush



## TWO-WORD answers

**Q:** When do humans first start smiling?

**A:** The womb.

We often start smiling, blinking and crying around 26 weeks gestation.



The fresh, clean feeling that comes with a good smile-scrubbing session is enough to get most people to brush – but toddlers aren't “most people.” According to pediatrician and author Dr. William Sears, toddlers are mainly motivated by having fun and being happy. If you've got a pint-sized protestor on your hands, your best bet is to make brushing a fun event. Sound challenging? These five ideas will help you get started.

1



### make it an event

When it's time to brush, gather the whole family in the bathroom and do it together. The more, the merrier! You can even crank a fun toothbrushing tune to make it a real party.

4



### reward their efforts

Develop a sticker chart and reward kids for hitting the mark for a week or a month. You can even add a fun seasonal spin with timely stickers such as pumpkins, ghosts and scarecrows!

2



### go old school

If futuristic timers and apps don't interest your child, go *back* in time instead. Purchase a sand timer that contains two minutes of sand. The sifting sand will fascinate kids and help them visualize time.

5



### try technology

It's recommended that everyone – kids *and* adults – brush twice a day for two minutes each time. Time can be a difficult concept for younger kids, but technology makes it easier. Look for a toothbrush equipped with music, lights or sound effects that play until it's time to rinse and spit. You can also download Delta Dental's free mobile app, which includes a toothbrush timer.

3



### practice makes perfect

Grab an old toothbrush and let your child brush the teeth of a favorite doll or stuffed animal. If the doll is plastic or washable, you can even try a dab of real toothpaste. Feeling brave? Let your tot practice on you with your toothbrush!

With fun tricks like these, toothbrushing tantrums can become a thing of the past.





# how to have a healthy HALLOWEEN PARTY

*At first glance, “healthy Halloween” seems to be more of a trick than a treat – but it’s easier to host a smile-friendly shindig than you may think. From spooky snacks to ghoulish games and activities, we’ve got some frighteningly good ideas to keep your kids’ Halloween party healthy.*

## fang-friendly foods



### FRUIT PHANTOMS AND PUMPKINS

Who knew ghosts could be so adorable? To make these cute fruits, peel bananas and cut them in half. Then add dark chocolate chips for the eyes and mouth. The pumpkins are even easier: Peel clementines or tangerines, then stick a sliver of celery in the top of each one to create a “stem.”

### DEVILED EGG SPIDERS

These eggs may look devilish, but because they’re sugar-free, they’re heavenly for smiles. All you need are deviled eggs – your favorite recipe will work – and pitted black olives. After you’ve assembled the deviled eggs, slice the olives in half lengthwise. Use one half for the spider’s body, then slice the other half into thin slivers to create the spider’s legs. Arrange an arachnid on top of each egg as a deliciously creepy garnish.



### CANDY CORN FRUIT PARFAIT

This sweet treat is healthier than the candy it resembles, and it’s a snap to assemble. Just use sugar-free pudding and food coloring to create candy corn-colored layers, then top with sugar-free whipped cream. You can also layer pineapple chunks in the bottom third of a Mason jar, then put mandarin oranges on top to make the middle section. Fill the remaining third of the jar with sugar-free whipped cream.

## hauntingly fun activities

### CANDY TRADE-IN

Borrow an idea from dentists who offer a candy “buy-back” program for their patients. Hold your party the day after trick-or-treating or a school Halloween party, and allow kids to trade in pieces of candy for prizes. The more they trade, the better the prize!

### PIN THE GRIN ON THE PUMPKIN

For this adapted version of pin the tail on the donkey, blindfolded partygoers try to attach a mouth to the proper place on a face of a grinless pumpkin. Feel free to use tape instead of thumbtacks or pins to protect little fingers . . . and your walls!

### MONSTER MASH BRUSHING

After kids have enjoyed snacks and treats, encourage good oral health by having a group brushing session. Play a silly Halloween song – we suggest “Purple People Eater” or “Monster Mash” – and have the kids brush their teeth for two minutes while they listen.



boo-tiful beverages



**PUMPKIN SMOOTHIE**

Pumpkins aren't just for carving – and this pumpkin smoothie will take much less time than crafting a jack-o'-lantern. Just combine these ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth:

- ½ cup canned pumpkin
- ½ cup crushed ice
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- ½ cup milk
- Stevia to taste

**SUGAR-FREE HOT CHOCOLATE**

This chocolaty brew is sure to be a hit with your little ghouls. Mix cocoa and salt in a mug. Using a separate container, microwave milk for 1 minute or until hot. Gradually add hot milk to cocoa mixture in mug, stirring until well blended. Stir in vanilla and sugar substitute, then top with sugar-free whipped cream.

- 1 tablespoon cocoa
- Dash of salt
- 1 cup milk
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla
- Stevia to taste
- Sugar-free whipped cream



**GREEN SLIME**

Kids will wonder what mad scientist dreamed up this creepy concoction – and then they'll ask for seconds! Just toss the ingredients below in a blender and blend until smooth. Then top with sugar-free whipped cream.

- 1 avocado
- Handful of baby spinach leaves
- 2 cups frozen pineapple
- 1 green pear, peeled and sliced
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and sliced
- 32 ounces of water
- Stevia to taste
- Sugar-free whipped cream



ghoulish giveaways

If you're giving away party favors or goodie bags, there's no need to load kids up with more candy. These giveaways will make them smile – and keep those smiles healthy!

**TRINKETS**

- Pencils and erasers
- Stickers
- Spider rings
- Glow sticks
- Bubbles
- Temporary tattoos

**ORAL HEALTH GOODIES**

- Toothbrushes
- Mini toothpastes
- Containers of floss

**SMALL TOYS**

- Mini containers of Play-Doh
- Crayons
- Mini puzzles
- Bouncy balls

**HAVE A HAPPY, HEALTHY HALLOWEEN – AND HAPPY HAUNTING!**

**DENTAL TREND  
SPOTLIGHT**

teeth-whitening charcoal tablets and powder

*Even we'll admit it – those YouTube videos of people brushing their teeth with black charcoal powder look pretty compelling. A toothy smile turns into a horror-movie-ready grin, all with the claim that a whiter smile is just around the corner.*

But what's the science behind this fad? Will it fade in favor of other teeth whiteners, or could it actually whiten those faded smiles?

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**

Don't grab the briquettes from your grill. Activated charcoal is different – it has been super-heated until extremely porous. Those pores absorb external substances like a sponge, which can be beneficial. For example, when given to a patient who has overdosed on medication, activated charcoal traps toxins before they release into the bloodstream.

Some people now believe those same absorption properties could remove stains from teeth. Users mix activated charcoal with water, apply it with a toothbrush and rinse after a few minutes.



**WILL IT ACTUALLY WHITEN MY TEETH?**

The short answer: maybe, but probably not. Consumer reviews are mixed, and the dental community recommends using other methods. "There's no evidence at all that activated charcoal does any good for your teeth," said Kim Harms, DDS, American Dental Association spokesperson.

**DOES IT HURT TO TRY IT?**

As it turns out, activated charcoal could have harmful effects on your teeth. When the grainy substance rubs against teeth, it has the potential to damage tooth enamel and gums. It may also increase tooth sensitivity. When people use it to replace their regular tooth-brushing routine, they also lose the cavity-protecting fluoride in toothpaste. While we don't recommend charcoal whitening, if you do try it, continue to use fluoride toothpaste as well.

In the end, Dr. Harms says, "There's no scientific indication that [activated charcoal] actually works and there are better options out there that do work." She recommends using standard, over-the-counter whitening products or in-office whitening treatments provided by your dentist. Talk to your dentist for a personalized recommendation.

**Our verdict on this one – the future of activated charcoal whitening may not look too bright.**



# updates in TEETH TECH

*The science behind smiles is always changing.  
Sink your teeth into these exciting innovations.*

## resin cavity fillings

If you're one of the roughly 35 million Americans whose teeth chatter with anxiety at the thought of sitting in the dentist's chair, this may be of interest to you: Instead of drilling into teeth to access decay, potentially damaging healthy areas in the process, dentists can fill certain cavities with liquid resin. Here's how it works:

- 1 The dentist determines the decay is in a spot that works with resin – it must be a small cavity located between teeth, also known as an interproximal cavity.
- 2 A special tool is slid between the teeth to release the resin.
- 3 The resin hardens and restores the surface of the tooth.
- 4 The result is a non-invasive treatment that eliminates pain – and the need for anesthesia.

The catch: This method only works for small cavities between teeth. For those pesky cavities on top of teeth or larger ones that require more extensive filling, patients will still need the standard drill-and-fill routine. That is, until the next game-changing anti-cavity innovation.

## digitized x-rays

It's a bird . . . It's a plane . . . It's Superman! Well, not exactly. But some dentists are getting a taste of his abilities by switching to more advanced X-ray technology.

Instead of film, digitized X-rays capture radiation with digital sensors or phosphor plates. The images are then sent to a computer, where dentists can view and store them for analysis.

In recent years, digital X-rays have become increasingly popular for their considerable benefits. They eliminate chemical processing so patients don't have to wait for a lab to process their images. They shrink radiation doses by using more sensitive receptors. And they make it easier for dentists to see root canals, implants and the bones below the teeth.

## tooth banking

Leaving baby teeth for the Tooth Fairy might not be the wisest choice. In 2003, the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research discovered that baby teeth and wisdom teeth contain stem cells. As researchers explore the practical applications of dental stem cells, cryogenic freezing companies offer a way to store these teeth for future use, known as "tooth banking."

The benefits of dental stem cells are under debate. Research suggests that stem cells found in the soft tissue, or "pulp," of teeth can be extracted and repurposed. Potential applications include regrowing a permanent tooth that has been lost or damaged, reconstructing bone tissue and maybe even treatment for complex conditions like multiple sclerosis.

Storing these teeth properly requires specific steps to preserve the usable tissue. Anyone interested in exploring the matter further should reach out to tooth banks and their dentist for in-depth information on benefits, concerns, pricing and storage.

**Painless cavity fillings, reduced X-ray radiation, and the potential to regrow our own teeth. With advancements like these, there's always a reason to smile.**

## how pre-treatment estimates work

*The next time you need a dental treatment, you don't have to be left in the dark wondering how much the bill will be.*

To help members understand costs before they're incurred, Delta Dental provides free pre-treatment estimates\*, which are sometimes referred to as pre-determinations or pre-authorizations. These estimates give patients an approximate idea of how much a dental treatment will cost overall, and how that cost will be split between the member and Delta Dental.

Getting a pre-treatment estimate is easy. The first step is to have your dentist submit a proposed treatment plan and supporting X-rays to Delta Dental. We will review these documents and your specific benefits plan, then respond to you and your dentist with a treatment cost estimate.

The estimate is based on the type of plan you have, your eligibility, your current plan benefits and the amount remaining in your annual maximum. Estimates are usually returned in a matter of days, but more complex treatments can take longer to assess.

Pre-treatment estimates are helpful when it comes to budgeting for dental procedures. They can also help determine how you and your dentist decide to proceed with a treatment – your dentist may be able to suggest alternate treatments and procedures based on what your plan covers. Estimates are most typically requested for costly procedures such as crowns, wisdom tooth extractions, bridges, dentures and oral surgery.

**Don't get left wondering how much your dental treatment is going to cost. Ask your dentist to request a pre-treatment estimate!**

\*This service is only available for Delta Dental PPO<sup>SM</sup> and Delta Dental Premier<sup>®</sup> members.

**4**  
**easy steps**  
to get a  
pre-treatment  
estimate

**1**  
Discuss dental  
procedure with dentist.

**2**  
Dentist submits a  
treatment plan and  
X-rays to Delta Dental.

**3**  
Delta Dental reviews  
the documents and  
your benefits.

**4**  
You receive a  
cost estimate from  
Delta Dental.



# your fall *smile* list

*These 10 autumnal to-do's are sure to make you grin!*

- 1 Pick out a pumpkin, then carve or paint it.
- 2 Go for a hike. Be sure to crunch some leaves.
- 3 Roast pumpkin seeds in the oven.
- 4 Simmer cinnamon and spices in water on the stove to create potpourri.
- 5 Check out a fall farmers market for squash, sweet potatoes and pumpkin.
- 6 Drive around and look at Halloween decorations.
- 7 Go on a local ghost or historical tour.
- 8 Master a delicious fall pumpkin recipe.  
(Try our pumpkin brownies on page 5!)
- 9 Hit up a high school football game.
- 10 Host a chili cook-off.

