DELTA DENTAL®

grin!®

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

winter
2015
volume 4, issue 4

All About Gum Disease

Is Your Medical Condition Causing Dental Problems?

5 Surprising Facts About Your Pet's Dental Health

What Your New Diet Means for Your Teeth

DELTA DENTAL®

grin!®

table of **contents**

4 **on topic with dr. kohn:** oral health in the news

mouth-friendly recipe: creamy avocado yogurt dip

5 **readers ask, we answer:** baby bottle decay

8 **the history of oral health:** baby tooth traditions around the world

10 **5 dental health facts about your pets**

12 **is your medical condition causing tooth troubles?**

13 **keeping you covered:** kids lack preventive care

14 **all about gum disease**

16 **brushing up:** an interview with dr. jose r. gonzales

6 feature article
what your new diet means for your teeth

cavity-free calendar

December

Happy holidays! It's OK to indulge in an occasional treat this season, but don't let snacking land you on the naughty list with your dentist.

January

Start off the **new year** right — book your next cleaning and exam!

February

Gum disease can happen to anyone. **February is Gum Disease Awareness Month.** Check out p. 14 to see how you can prevent and treat gum disease.

dental benefits on the go

Delta Dental's free mobile app gives you access to recent claims and coverage information from the convenience of your phone. You can also access your ID card. Looking for an in-network dentist? The app can help. Search for a dentist by network, dental specialty, location or a provider's last name. And by clicking on a dentist's name, you can view additional information, add the dentist to your contacts and even get directions to the dental office. **Download the free app today!**

two-word answers

Q: What's a good New Year's resolution?

A: Floss more!

on topic with dr. kohn

oral health in the news

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.

The press often covers the possible links between gum disease and other problems, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and pre-term birth. Likewise, researchers continue to investigate the nature of these associations. It is unfortunate, however, that almost half of U.S. adults over age 30 have gum disease, considering that it is so preventable. Although we often tune out the age-old advice for good oral health of "brush twice a day, floss daily, eat a healthy diet, limit sugar and see your dentist regularly," following it is still the best way to prevent gum disease and tooth decay. What's more, don't smoke and, if you do, quit. Smoking is believed to contribute to half of all cases of periodontal disease in the U.S. So here's the real news: Keep your mouth healthy through simple preventive measures. It may also help you manage other health issues.

mouth-friendly recipe:
creamy avocado yogurt dip

With calcium-rich Greek yogurt and creamy avocado packed with vitamin C, this smile-friendly dip makes a great appetizer for your next holiday party.

Ingredients:

1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
2 ripe avocados, peeled and pitted
1 clove garlic, minced
3 tablespoons chopped cilantro
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
Salt and pepper to taste
Veggies to dip, such as carrots, celery and pepper strips

readers ask, we answer

Shelly asks:

"I heard you shouldn't put your baby to bed with a bottle. Is that true?"

Hi, Shelly. Yes, sucking on bottles or sippy cups with sugary drinks for long time periods can lead to tooth decay. Even natural sugars found in milk and juices can cause damage. If your child takes a bottle or sippy cup to bed, make sure it only contains water, and wean your child from bottles between 12 and 14 months.

It's never too early to start thinking about your child's dental health. You should clean and massage your baby's gums before his or her first teeth emerge, and start using a toothbrush as soon as teeth erupt. Your baby's first dental visit should happen by his or her first birthday, putting your child on track for a lifetime of great oral health.

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

Directions:
Mix the yogurt, avocados, garlic, cilantro, lime juice and cumin in a blender or food processor until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer dip to a serving dish and enjoy with sliced veggies!

THE SKINNY ON DIETING

HOW DIETS AFFECT YOUR ORAL HEALTH

Losing weight is the No. 1 most popular New Year's resolution. If it's on your list, you've probably got your waistline, not your teeth, in mind. But weight-loss diets can have a major impact on your oral health.

low-fat

Low-fat diets can interfere with your body's ability to absorb fat-soluble vitamins, such as A, D, E and K. Vitamin D is especially important — it helps your body absorb calcium. When you can't absorb calcium properly, your teeth and bones start to break down.

What's more, fat helps your brain produce dopamine, a mood-boosting chemical neurotransmitter. Eating a diet low in omega-3 fatty acids can intensify feelings of stress and anxiety, making you more likely to grind your teeth.

Finally, manufacturers often add sugar to reduced-fat products to maintain taste and texture. That added sugar means a higher chance of cavities.

low-carb

When you're on a low- or no-carb diet, your breath may start to smell like nail polish remover. The unique scent of acetone — or sometimes rotten fruit — is a tell-tale sign of ketosis, the process in which your body starts burning fat instead of carbohydrates for fuel, releasing chemicals called ketones.

You can get rid of keto-breath by drinking more water, brushing your teeth and tongue regularly and chewing on natural breath fresheners like parsley and mint. Not surprisingly, though, the most effective way to freshen your breath is by eating carbs. And that may not be a bad idea, considering high levels of ketones can induce ketoacidosis, an illness in which your blood levels grow dangerously acidic. An overload of ketones can also make your body start to burn muscle instead of fat, cause intense fatigue and even damage your heart.

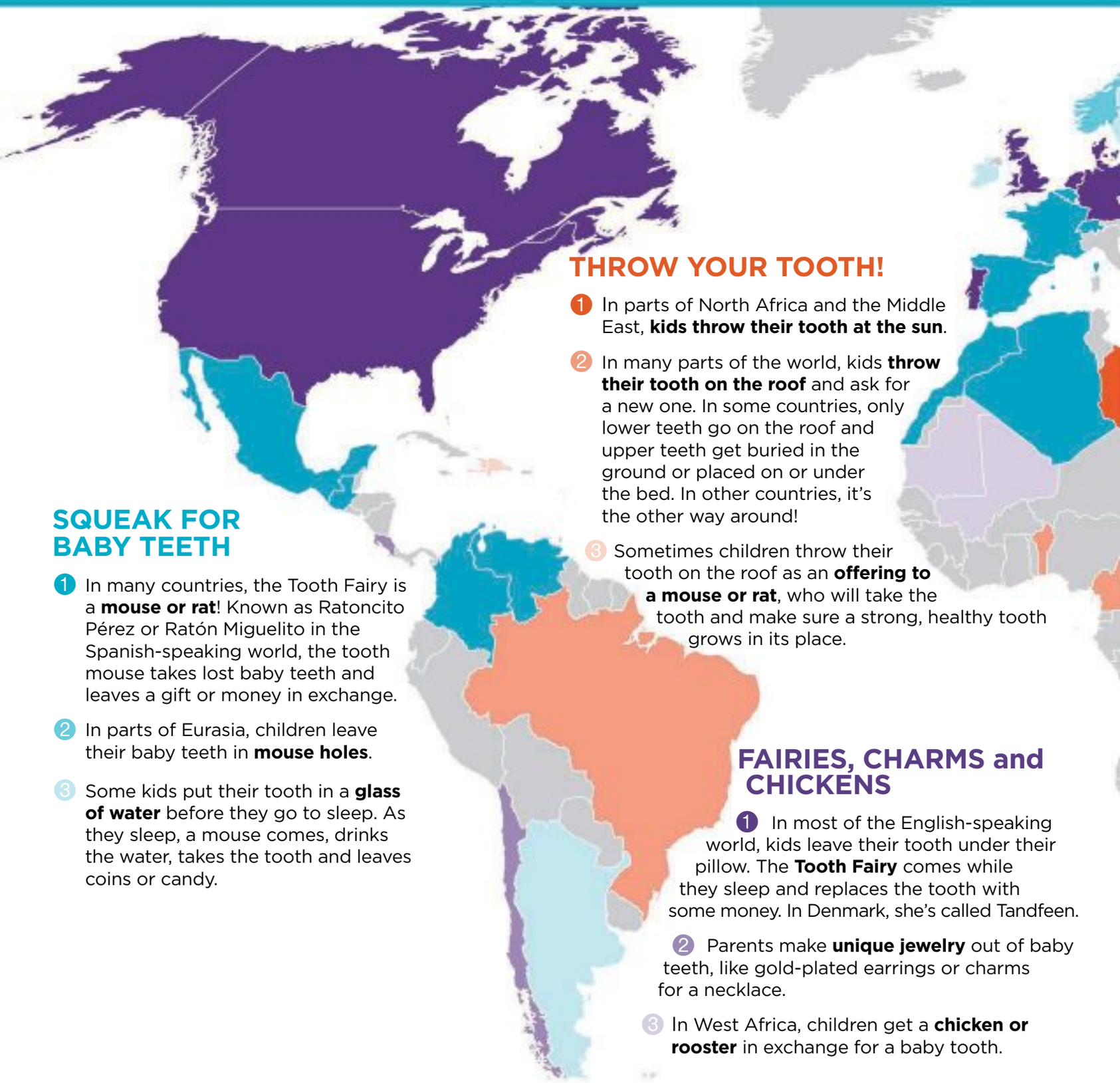
low-calorie

Cutting calories may be an effective way to lose weight, but reducing your food intake too much can wreak havoc on your health, since it depletes your body of necessary minerals and vitamins.

Malnutrition is bad news all around, but for your mouth it can mean a weakened jawbone (causing your teeth to move or fall out), softened enamel (increasing your chance of cavities) and deficient gums (making you vulnerable to gum disease).

Before you jump into a new diet, consult your doctor and dentist.

the history of oral health:
Baby Tooth Traditions Around the World



THROW YOUR TOOTH!

1. In parts of North Africa and the Middle East, **kids throw their tooth at the sun**.
2. In many parts of the world, kids **throw their tooth on the roof** and ask for a new one. In some countries, only lower teeth go on the roof and upper teeth get buried in the ground or placed on or under the bed. In other countries, it's the other way around!
3. Sometimes children throw their tooth on the roof as an **offering to a mouse or rat**, who will take the tooth and make sure a strong, healthy tooth grows in its place.

SQUEAK FOR BABY TEETH

1. In many countries, the Tooth Fairy is a **mouse or rat**! Known as Ratoncito Pérez or Ratón Miguelito in the Spanish-speaking world, the tooth mouse takes lost baby teeth and leaves a gift or money in exchange.
2. In parts of Eurasia, children leave their baby teeth in **mouse holes**.
3. Some kids put their tooth in a **glass of water** before they go to sleep. As they sleep, a mouse comes, drinks the water, takes the tooth and leaves coins or candy.

FAIRIES, CHARMS and CHICKENS

1. In most of the English-speaking world, kids leave their tooth under their pillow. The **Tooth Fairy** comes while they sleep and replaces the tooth with some money. In Denmark, she's called Tandfeen.
2. Parents make **unique jewelry** out of baby teeth, like gold-plated earrings or charms for a necklace.
3. In West Africa, children get a **chicken or rooster** in exchange for a baby tooth.

What happens when you lose a baby tooth? From the Tooth Fairy to the Tooth Mouse, different cultures celebrate a variety of traditions. Find out what children do with their baby teeth all across the globe.

BACK TO THE EARTH

1. In many cultures, children **bury their teeth.** In Turkey, the place you bury your teeth will determine your future: To be a successful soccer player, you might bury your tooth in a soccer field.
2. Some kids throw their tooth into a **field or river**.
3. In some cultures, children wrap their tooth in meat or bread and **feed it to an animal**, like a mouse or dog.

What form does the Tooth Fairy take?

It depends where you go — she can be a fairy, mouse, rat, sparrow, crow, rabbit or even a squirrel!

Pet Dental Health: 5 Fun Facts

February is Pet Dental Health Month! In honor of the occasion, we rounded up some of our favorite interesting facts about the oral health of our four-legged (and two-finned) friends.

1

Dogs don't have cleaner mouths.
Have you ever heard the saying "A dog's mouth is nine times cleaner than a human's"? As it turns out, this bit of folk wisdom is a myth. Dogs' mouths are full of bacteria, and, unlike you, they don't brush and floss every day. By their third birthday, 80% of dogs suffer from gum disease. Like their owners, dogs need regular preventive dental care to maintain healthy mouths, so book a dental cleaning and exam for your furry companion.

2 **Goldfish have teeth.** Their teeth are very flat, like our molar teeth — and just like our molars, they crush and grind food. Goldfish lose and re-grow teeth throughout their lives.

3 **Cats have fewer teeth than we do.** Cats have just 30 teeth (compared with humans' 32). Like ours, their teeth perform specific functions — including grasping, tearing and crushing food.

4 **A rabbit's teeth never stop growing.** Though wild rabbits have plenty of things to gnaw on to help keep their growing teeth in check, pet bunnies rely on wooden toys and timothy hay. If rabbits' teeth get too long, they may find it too painful to eat.

5 **A horse has more teeth than brain matter.** The typical adult horse has 36 to 40 permanent teeth that are each about four inches long. Since the average horse brain weighs just under two pounds, a horse's teeth occupy more space than its brain!

Just like humans, animals need healthy mouths to maintain a healthy body. This February, celebrate Pet Dental Health Month by asking your veterinarian about what you can do to keep your pet's teeth and gums in tip-top shape.

5 Health Problems That Can Send You to the Dentist

Did you know that problems in other parts of your body can have consequences for your teeth and gums? From diabetes to ulcers, these illnesses can erode teeth, cause bad breath and even turn your tongue black!

1 **ACID REFLUX.** Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or acid reflux, is often detected by dentists because a major sign of the disease is tooth erosion. Acidic juices from the stomach flow upward into the mouth and dissolve tooth enamel over time. When you experience a reflux episode, protect your teeth by rinsing vigorously with water or chewing sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow and reduce acid in your mouth. Do not brush your teeth immediately after experiencing reflux — the bristles can damage enamel already weakened by acid.

2 **KIDNEY DISEASE.** This disease often causes patients to develop fishy breath, because the kidneys can no longer effectively filter waste and toxins from the blood. If you notice that you have fishy breath, visit your doctor. Kidney disease left untreated will lead to kidney failure.

3 **ULCERS.** Appearing as sores in the lining of your stomach or small intestine, ulcers are often the result of the bacterium *H. pylori*, which can weaken the protective coating of your stomach. Although ulcers won't hurt your oral health, the medicine used to combat the ulcer can turn your tongue black temporarily. Don't worry — the side effect is harmless.

4 **DIABETES.** This systemic disease doesn't just affect your blood sugar. People with diabetes face a higher risk of cavities, gum disease and tooth loss. If you've been diagnosed, tell your dentist and be extra vigilant about brushing and flossing.

5 **HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE.** The medications often used to treat high blood pressure can have a side effect known as gingival enlargement. This condition causes the gums to swell and grow over the teeth, which can be painful and lead to serious infection of the gums. If you think you might have gum overgrowth, book an appointment with your dentist immediately.

keeping you covered:
Kids Lack Preventive Care

Millions of children aren't receiving the preventive dental care they need, according to a recent study by Delta Dental. These kids aren't being taken to the dentist or given sealants or fluoride treatments, which puts them at serious risk of tooth decay.

Top findings of Delta Dental's 2015 Preventive Care Study

Less than one-third (29%) of children younger than 3 years old had any dental service.

Three-fourths (75%) of children ages 3–18 did not receive any dental service.

More than one-fourth (26%) of children up to age 18 are at high risk for tooth decay.

Nearly 65% of high-risk children did not receive two fluoride treatments per year.

More than 85% of high-risk children ages 10–14 did not receive sealants on their second molars.

Nearly 67% of high-risk children ages 6–9 did not receive sealants on their first molars.

Invest in preventive care to save money down the road. Delta Dental plans offer preventive care at low or no cost, and the earlier you address a dental problem the more money you'll save in the long term.

Delta Dental's Preventive Dental Care Study is an annual study that investigates whether high-risk children and adults receive the preventive care they need. For the calendar year 2014, the study analyzed more than 97 million dental claims. For more information on the study, visit deltadental.com/pdcstudy.

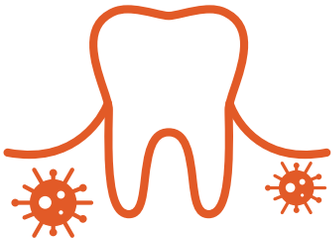
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GUM DISEASE

Nearly half of adults over 30 suffer from some form of gum disease, also known as periodontal disease. Research shows a link between gum disease and many other chronic illnesses, including heart disease and diabetes, all of which are inflammatory diseases.

The matter is so serious that governors in 28 states have signed proclamations declaring February Gum Disease Awareness Month. Find out the facts about gum disease — and what you can do to prevent it.

WHAT IT IS

Gum disease is a chronic bacterial infection that causes your gums to pull away from your teeth. Caused by plaque under the gum line, the condition can leave you with bleeding gums and loose teeth. The earliest stage of gum disease is called **gingivitis**, while advanced gum disease is called **periodontitis**. Gum disease is the leading cause of tooth loss in adults.



CAUSES

A number of factors contribute to plaque buildup, leading to gum disease. **Poor dental hygiene**, including brushing and flossing improperly, can be a major contributor. A **poor diet** and **lack of vitamin C** can also make gums vulnerable to infection, as can **stress**. All forms of tobacco, including cigarettes and chewing tobacco, have been linked to gum disease. Medical conditions, such as **diabetes, HIV** and **pregnancy**, and use of some **medications** may also increase your risk for gum disease.

Finally, **genetics** can play a role. As many as 30 percent of people may be at risk for gum disease just because of their genes, making them up to six times as likely to have periodontal disease as those without a family history of the problem. That's another reason regular preventive dental visits are so important.

TREATMENT

To treat gum disease, especially for moderate cases, dentists often recommend a special procedure called **scaling and root planing**. Scaling involves the removal of plaque and tartar from the surface of the tooth, while planing targets the tooth root. This procedure may require anesthesia.

If the problem is severe, your dentist may recommend **periodontal surgery** to remove the tartar, bacteria and diseased tissues. This treatment reattaches your gum tissue to healthy bone. Your dentist may also prescribe a special mouth rinse, antibiotic gel or oral medication to help control harmful bacteria.

PREVENTION

The best way to prevent gum disease is to follow a routine oral health regimen and overall healthy lifestyle. These steps can go a long way toward keeping your gums healthy:

Brush for two minutes, twice a day, and floss at least once a day.

Avoid all tobacco products.

Eat a balanced diet low in sugar.

Stay on top of your regular cleanings and exams.

brushing up

Ever wonder what your dentist is really thinking? *Grin!* wanted to find out, too, so we talked to Delta Dental network dentist Dr. Jose R. Gonzales of G Dental Studio.

Do you brush and floss as much as you recommend?
I see a lot of problems that could have been avoided with a simple brushing and flossing routine, so, yes — a majority of the time, I brush more often than most!

Do you have a favorite floss flavor?
Cinnamon.

Do you have any cavities?
I have had them.

If you could tell patients to stop doing one thing, what would it be?
Stop chewing ice.

What's your favorite dental joke?
I usually tell patients that their problems are all in their heads! Most get it — however, if they don't, I kindly joke that all of their teeth are in their head.

Do you have any traditions or special things in your office?
Patients can watch movies and relax during their visits at G Dental Studio. Our office has a spa-like atmosphere. It is very calming.

If you'd like to recommend your dentist for a Brushing Up interview, email grin@deltadental.com with his or her name and contact information.