

# WORD of MOUTH<sup>®</sup>

A Semiannual Publication of the Massachusetts Dental Society

Winter - Spring 2015



## Baby Boomers

Cut Their Teeth on Oral Health Issues

| See Pages 6-7



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The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) is pleased to make this publication available to our member dentists as a way of communicating important oral health information to their patients.

Information in **WORD OF MOUTH** articles comes from dental health care professionals of the MDS and other leading professional dental organizations, including the American Dental Association. If you have any questions about specific content that may affect your oral health, please contact your dentist. For news regarding oral health, visit the “For the Public” section of the MDS website at [www.massdental.org](http://www.massdental.org).

Your comments and suggestions regarding **WORD OF MOUTH** are always welcome. All correspondence and requests for additional copies may be forwarded to Melissa Carman, Director of Publications, Massachusetts Dental Society, Two Willow Street, Suite 200, Southborough, MA 01745-1027, or email [mcarman@massdental.org](mailto:mcarman@massdental.org).

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# Everyday Dental Care

Being a caregiver to a person with special needs is rife with everyday challenges that may require a particular type of skillfulness and a generous amount of persistence to tackle. One of those challenges can be providing daily oral health care to someone with a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional issue. Regular brushing (twice daily) and flossing (once daily) as recommended by the American Dental Association are critical to maintaining good oral health and overall well-being, and should be just as much of a priority as taking daily prescribed medications and getting exercise.

People with developmental disabilities have a high rate of tooth decay, gum disease, and tooth loss, which remains a significant public health issue, according to the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine (TUSDM). Therefore, if a person is unable to brush and floss on his or her own, it’s important that a caregiver provide assistance. In fact, a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association* by researchers from TUSDM and the Tufts University School of Medicine found that 85 percent of adults with developmental disabilities received assistance with teeth cleaning. Most brushed the recommended twice a day, but only 22 percent flossed daily. Forty-five percent never flossed. These findings suggested to researchers that improved support and education to caregivers is needed.

“We were surprised to find that, while 71.6 percent of paid caregivers who participated in our study reported having received formal group training in oral health care, only 6.4 percent of family caregivers reported the same,” says Aviva Must, PhD, senior author of the study. “Given the vital role that caregivers play in promoting good oral health in this population, we need to ensure that all receive the guidance and support they need to be effective.”

Caregivers should consult with a dentist if they have any concerns or questions about the oral hygiene of someone they care for. In addition, oral hygiene assistance information and tips for caregivers can be found on the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) website. *Dental Care Every Day: A Caregiver’s Guide* ([www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/DevelopmentalDisabilities/DentalcareEveryday.htm](http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/DevelopmentalDisabilities/DentalcareEveryday.htm))

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# for People with Special Needs

is a comprehensive resource that includes illustrations to demonstrate helpful techniques, such as flossing or retrofitting a toothbrush so it's easier to hold. The Massachusetts Dental Society has also created a series of instructional videos featuring basic oral health care techniques that caregivers can utilize. The videos are posted at [www.youtube.com/massdentalsociety](http://www.youtube.com/massdentalsociety).

While there are a lot of details to consider before beginning an oral hygiene routine with a developmentally disabled individual, the NIDCR recommends some basic principles caregivers should follow.

First, decide where the dental care will be done. While we normally equate “bathroom sink” with toothbrushing, the care doesn't have to take place in the bathroom. It might be more comfortable to use the dining room table, where the individual can be seated and where there is more space for the caregiver to maneuver and place supplies. If the person being cared for is afraid of the brushing and flossing process, the NIDCR suggests trying the “tell–show–do” approach. Start by explaining how you will help him or her brush and floss and what it will feel like. Next, show how you will perform each step before doing it. Then, go ahead and do each step, after it has been explained and demonstrated. Establishing a daily routine for dental care may also help ease fear and increase comfort with the process.

Have all supplies ready before beginning. Caregivers will need a small, soft-bristled manual or electric toothbrush; floss and floss aids; toothpaste; a cup of water for rinsing; a bowl for spitting; and disposable gloves. A small flashlight may also be useful for seeing into the mouth. For patients who have difficulty keeping their mouths open, a mouth prop may be needed. Mouth props should always be placed on the posterior (back) teeth, never front or loose teeth. Caregivers should first wash their hands and put on disposable gloves, and then position themselves so they can see all surfaces of the teeth. Using a pea-size amount of toothpaste, angle the brush 45 degrees at the gumline and brush the front, back, and top of each tooth. Help the person rinse with water using the cup and bowl.


Flossing may require more practice. But taking an 18-inch string of floss and wrapping it around each middle finger, then gripping it between the thumb and index finger of each hand, is the recommended setup. Beginning with the lower front teeth and making your way to the top front teeth and then the rest of the mouth, work the floss gently between each tooth until it reaches the gumline. Then slip the floss under the gum and slide it up and down. Repeat on both sides of every tooth. In addition to a daily brushing and flossing routine, a visit to the dentist every six months is critical for good oral health. That's good advice for anyone, not only for people with special needs.

Because caregivers provide a vital service, it's important they have the resources they need to do their jobs well. With greater access to training and information for caregivers on the importance of a daily oral health routine for their patients and loved ones, they can help prevent oral disease and decay and lead to better quality of life.



# Alcohol and Oral Health:

## Keeping Your Teeth in Good Spirits



Positive and negative effects of alcohol? We have all heard of some of them. Excessive alcohol consumption is known to be linked to many health issues, including heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and liver disease. When we hear those disclaimers on television that tell adults to drink responsibly, we don't immediately think of our oral health. However, it turns out that alcohol plays a role in toothaches as well as morning-after headaches. Here are some reasons why alcohol can deteriorate our oral health, and some reasons that show how certain alcoholic beverages, when imbibed in moderation, may actually benefit our teeth.

Alcoholic drinks can be bad for our oral health because they often contain a lot of sugar and can be highly acidic. Food and beverages with high amounts of sugar and acid contribute to tooth decay and gum disease. It really all has to do with the bacteria in our mouths, which need sugar to survive. As the bacteria consume sugar, they produce harmful acids that demineralize tooth enamel, weakening the tooth and paving the way for cavities.

So, if sugars and acids deteriorate our teeth, how is it then, with all the food we eat from day to day, that not every tooth needs a filling after years of exposure to these sugars and acids? Well, our body naturally produces saliva, which fights the effects of sugars and acids in our mouths by constantly rinsing our oral cavity and stopping food from lodging between our teeth. It also has its own ingredients that help neutralize acid and remineralize enamel.

Clearly, saliva is a multitasked custodian and without it, we are at a big disadvantage. And drinking alcoholic beverages can put us at a further disadvantage, because alcohol dehydrates the body, including the mouth. If you've ever had some drinks on a night out and then woken up in the middle of the night with a case of "mummy mouth," you know what this means. Saliva is temporarily not there for protection, and we have allowed the bacteria in our mouth to feast. If acids can demineralize tooth enamel faster than saliva can remineralize it, there's a great chance decay will begin.

Not to mention, alcohol abuse has its way of breaking down a person's good oral habits. If someone is using alcohol in a dependent manner, he or she may not be brushing, flossing, and visiting the dentist as frequently as needed. And of course, this can lead to a dental disaster.

Furthermore, and most importantly, because alcohol consumption over time makes it hard for our bodies to resist bacteria, it is a universally recognized perpetuator of many types of cancer, including oral cancer. Heavy use of alcohol is considered a major risk factor for oral and throat cancers, according to the National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People who are heavy drinkers are more likely to develop oral cancer than those who don't drink alcohol at all, and the risk increases with the amount of alcohol that a person drinks. Not surprisingly, this risk increases even more if the person both drinks alcohol and uses tobacco. In fact, three out of four people with oral cancer have used tobacco, alcohol, or both, says the National Cancer Institute. And while all three forms of alcohol (beer, wine, and hard liquor) have been found to be associated with oral cancer, beer and hard liquor consumption have a higher risk, according to the Oral Cancer Foundation.

Clearly, then, the negative oral effects of alcohol are evident, but are there any positive effects? In a study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, researchers found that compounds in wine called polyphenols can block bacteria from cohering together and attaching to teeth. These polyphenols allow good bacteria to flourish while diminishing bad bacteria. Therefore, wine can prevent harmful bacteria from growing too readily.

Make sure, however, to take this one glass at a time, because, if you drink too much, the bad parts of wine—the sugars and acids—may override its positive effects. Keep this in mind especially for white wine, as it's been found to be more acidic than red wine and might quite easily do more harm than good. So, cheers to polyphenols for making us feel less guilty about having a glass of wine to wind down after a long day.

At the end of the day, brushing, flossing, and regular visits to the dentist are all important, especially if we have a drink, even if only occasionally. It's also a good idea to wash down that drink with a big glass of water, which pulls double duty by helping to keep us hydrated and washing away sugar and acids from tooth surfaces.

So, as we continue to enjoy nights of jollity and a drink or two with family and friends, let us also continue to enjoy a mouth full of tiptop teeth, which is something we can really toast to!

# TOOTH "PICKS"

## Brushing Up on Oral Hygiene Habits

Here's the good news: Most Americans (69 percent) brush their teeth twice a day, as recommended by the American Dental Association (ADA). The bad news: Nearly 30 percent just aren't brushing enough. In fact, a scary number—23 percent—of people have gone two or more days without brushing in the past year, and only 41 percent floss at least once a day. These statistics from the Delta Dental Oral Health and Well-Being Survey shed a bright light on the oral hygiene habits of Americans. The survey also reported that the average brushing time is one minute and 52 seconds, just under the ADA's two-minute recommendation. One thing is for sure, when it comes to kissing, a clean and healthy mouth is important. More than 30 percent of respondents reported that they made their partners brush before puckering up, which may be extra motivation for Americans to "brush up" on good oral hygiene habits.

## The Power of Laser Light

Lasers aren't just for hair removal and Jedi knights; they are also an important tool in dentistry that can help teeth repair themselves. A Harvard University-led team of researchers has found that human dental stem cells implanted in the molars of rats and exposed to the light of low-powered lasers will form dentin, the hard bone-like tissue that is one of the layers of your teeth. The laser light activates certain molecules within the stem cells, triggering them to grow into dentin. As a result of this research, scientists believe that future dental professionals may be able to regenerate—rather than replace—existing teeth with the use of lasers.

## Coffee: A Perk for Your Gums



Your morning cup of coffee helps you wake up, but it could also help protect your gums from disease, according to a study by researchers at the Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine. The study, which was published in the *Journal of Periodontology*, looked at the oral health and coffee consumption data collected every three years from 1,152 healthy adult males during dental visits between 1968 and 1998. The study subjects were participants in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Longitudinal Study. After analyzing the data, researchers discovered that drinking coffee was associated with a small but statistically significant reduction in the number of teeth with periodontal bone loss in men. "This is the first long-term study of its kind that has investigated the association between coffee consumption and periodontal disease in humans," says lead author Dr. Nathan Ng. Although more research still needs to be done on different populations, these findings certainly suggest another perk of a regular cup of joe.

## Tooth Fairy Economics

The Tooth Fairy worked hard to pinch her pennies last year. In 2014, U.S. kids received an average of \$3.40 per tooth—an 8 percent decrease from 2013—according to Visa's annual Tooth Fairy Survey. The survey also found that father "fairies" leave 45 percent more money than mother "fairies" do. And a lucky, but measly, 4 percent of kids found \$20 or more under their pillows last year, down from the 6 percent of kids who received that amount in 2013. Here's hoping that 2015 brings better luck to the wobbly-tooth set.



## Kids' Spit Could Determine Risk for Diabetes

Determining a child's risk for developing type 2 diabetes may soon become less invasive. Instead of traditional blood and urine tests, scientists have found that analyzing certain biomarkers—measurable substances that may predict disease or infection—in children's saliva can help to identify those at risk for developing the disease. The Forsyth Institute study evaluated saliva samples from 744 11-year-olds of various weight classes. Four specific biomarkers (insulin, C-reactive protein, adiponectin, and leptin) were found to change significantly in obese participants. And because obesity is linked to type 2 diabetes, saliva tests may be an important tool in simplifying screening procedures and developing strategies to prevent the progression of the disease.

# Baby Boomers

## Cut Their Teeth on Oral Health Issues

The United States is on the verge of a major generational shift as the country experiences rapid growth in its older population. The first members of the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) turned 65 in 2011, and 14 years from now, the last of the Baby Boomers will join the 65-and-over age group, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In fact, by 2029, more than 20 percent of the U.S. population will be over the age of 65. Having grown up benefiting from such oral health boons as fluoridated water and dental treatment advances, Baby Boomers may be the first generation to enter retirement with better oral health than their parents.

But as the oldest members of the Baby Boom generation ease into retirement age, their thoughts most likely turn to managing financial matters (e.g., retirement accounts, pensions, and Social Security checks), spending more time with their grandchildren, taking up a new hobby, or volunteering. One thing that they shouldn't overlook is their oral health. Just like the rest of the body, the mouth is affected by advancing age and undergoes changes impacting teeth's appearance and, more importantly, health. According to the Massachusetts Dental Society, understanding these changes and what can be done about them is key to maintaining good oral health. Healthy teeth and gums are important to people of all ages, and a healthy mouth plays an important role in chewing food, in speaking, and in overall health. Here are some things for Baby Boomers to consider as they prepare their smiles for retirement.

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### Tooth Color

One of the changes you may notice as you grow older is that it's harder to keep your teeth clean and white. Teeth may appear dull and even have tinges of yellow or grey. Why does this happen? While years of drinking coffee, cola, and red wine certainly don't keep your teeth pearly white, this discoloration happens because the sticky, colorless layer of bacteria, also known as plaque, in your mouth can build up faster and in greater amounts as you age. Additionally, changes in dentin—the bone-like tissue that is under your enamel—may cause your teeth to appear slightly darker.

One aspect of having more birthdays under your belt is accepting aging and having realistic expectations for your appearance. However, that doesn't mean as an older adult, you can't benefit from many of the options available today for improving the look of your smile, including teeth whitening. You should relay your concerns about your smile's appearance to your dentist, who can discuss the range of treatment options that may be right for you. Coupled with good oral hygiene, cosmetic techniques can help improve your appearance and self-confidence.

### Dry Mouth

Reduced saliva flow that results in a dry mouth is a common problem among older adults. Dry mouth, also known as xerostomia, is caused by certain medical disorders and is often a side effect of medications such as antihistamines, decongestants, painkillers, high blood pressure medication, diuretics, and antidepressants. Be sure to inform your dentist of all medications you take, including over-the-counter medi-

cations. Some of the common problems associated with dry mouth include a constant sore throat, burning sensation, problems speaking, difficulty swallowing, hoarseness, or dry nasal passages. If left untreated, dry mouth can jeopardize oral health. Not having enough saliva to lubricate the mouth, wash away food, and neutralize the acids produced by plaque can lead to extensive decay. Dry mouth can also lead to irritated soft tissues in the mouth, making them inflamed and more susceptible to infection.

If you suffer from dry mouth, contact your dentist, who can recommend various methods to restore moisture. In addition to chewing sugar-free gum, commercial products such as artificial saliva and tissue lubricants are used to relieve dry mouth symptoms. If the symptoms persist, you should see your physician to rule out a possible underlying medical condition.



## Gum Disease

According to the American Academy of Periodontology, 70 percent of Americans 65 and older have periodontitis, the advanced stage of gum disease. Gum disease is a major cause of tooth loss among adults because bacteria naturally present in your mouth thrive on the sugars and starches in foods you eat. The bacteria create toxins, which irritate the gums. Over time—and often without pain—the gums detach from the teeth, and if left untreated, the supporting bone may dissolve, causing the teeth to become loose. This condition may require surgical treatment of the gums or removal of teeth.

Additionally, ill-fitting dentures or bridges, poor diet, subpar oral hygiene, medical conditions, and even some medications can increase the severity of gum disease. Signs to look for include gums that are red, swollen, and tender, bleed easily, or have pus in the areas between the teeth. Other signs include changes in the fit of partial dentures, any change in the way your teeth fit together, gums that have receded from the teeth, or natural teeth that are loose.

## Cavities

Unfortunately, cavities aren't just kid stuff. Changes that occur with aging make cavities a grown-up problem, too. Recession of the gums away from the teeth, combined with an increased incidence of gum disease, can expose tooth roots to plaque. Tooth roots, which are covered with cementum—a softer tissue than enamel—are susceptible to decay and more sensitive to touch and to heat and cold. According to the American Dental Association, it's common for people over age 50 to have tooth-root decay.

Decay around the edges—or margins—of dental fillings is also common to older adults. Over the years, these fillings may weaken and tend to fracture and leak around the edges. Bacteria can accumulate in these tiny crevices, causing acid to build up, which leads to decay.

## Tooth Loss

Tooth loss doesn't have to be an inevitable part of aging, especially with more and more of the graying population maintaining their natural teeth into their Golden Years. But if you do lose teeth due to gum disease, tooth decay, or injury, it's critical that they be replaced so your mouth can function properly. Thankfully, there are a number of options available today for replacing missing teeth:

### Bridges

A bridge is an artificial tooth that is placed adjacent to natural teeth, also known as abutment teeth. Bridges can be applied either permanently (fixed bridges) or they can be removable. Fixed bridges are applied either by placing crowns on abutment teeth to provide support for artificial teeth or by bonding the artificial teeth directly to the abutment teeth. Removable bridges are attached to the teeth by either metal clasps or precision attachments.

### Dental Implants

Much more common these days, dental implants attach directly to the jawbone. Because implants attach so securely, they look and feel natural, and offer better chewing ability. However, candidates for implants must be in good health and have enough bone with which to secure the implant. Your dentist can let you know if implants are an option for you.

## Dentures

For people who have lost all or most of their natural teeth, dentures are a great choice to replace missing teeth, restore eating and speaking ability, and even improve appearance and self-esteem. Unlike the dentures your grandparents used to wear, today's dentures are made to closely resemble your natural teeth and are less noticeable. There are two types of dentures: Full dentures replace all of the natural teeth and partial dentures replace only some of the natural teeth.

## Dental Checkups

Even if you've lost some or all of your teeth, routine dental visits should still be a necessary part of your health care routine. Teeth and gums are vulnerable to many serious problems and should be examined by your dentist regularly. Your dentist will advise you on how often you should have checkups (e.g., if you have periodontitis, your dentist may want to see you more than twice a year). Checking the condition of your teeth is just one of the many functions your dentist performs. He or she will also be looking for signs of gum disease and oral cancer. In addition, other medical conditions often have symptoms that first appear in the mouth. And if you wear dentures, your dentist will want to make sure they still fit and, if not, make any necessary adjustments.

## Oral Hygiene

Older adults are still susceptible to tooth decay, which is why it's important to maintain good oral hygiene habits, including brushing at least twice a day and flossing once a day. Daily brushing and flossing help remove plaque, but once that plaque hardens into tartar, it can only be removed by a dental professional. Some people form tartar faster than others and may need to have their teeth professionally cleaned at a dental office more often.

While it can be hard for any of us, including Baby Boomers, to accept the fact that we are aging, it's good to remember that old (no pun!) saying, "With age comes wisdom." It's also good to remember "With knowledge comes power." Although your mouth may go through many changes as you age, you have the power to avoid dental decay and gum disease. That's why it's important that Baby Boomers (and Generation Xers and Yers, and Millennials . . .) include oral health in their retirement planning.



It's not easy being a parent, but here's something simple you can do. Spend two minutes twice a day making sure they brush; it could help save them from a lifetime of tooth pain. Make it fun, text MOUTH to 97779 to join the 2MIN2X Challenge.



# 2MIN 2XDAY



Easier than explaining where  
the goldfish went.



Message & Data Rates May Apply. Reply STOP to opt-out. We'll text you 2 times a month. No purchase necessary. Terms and Privacy: <http://2min2x.org/privacy-policy>. ©2014 Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives. All Rights Reserved.





### Soda Consumption in the United States

**38.6 gallons**

Amount of soda consumed per American in 2013

**8.9 billion**

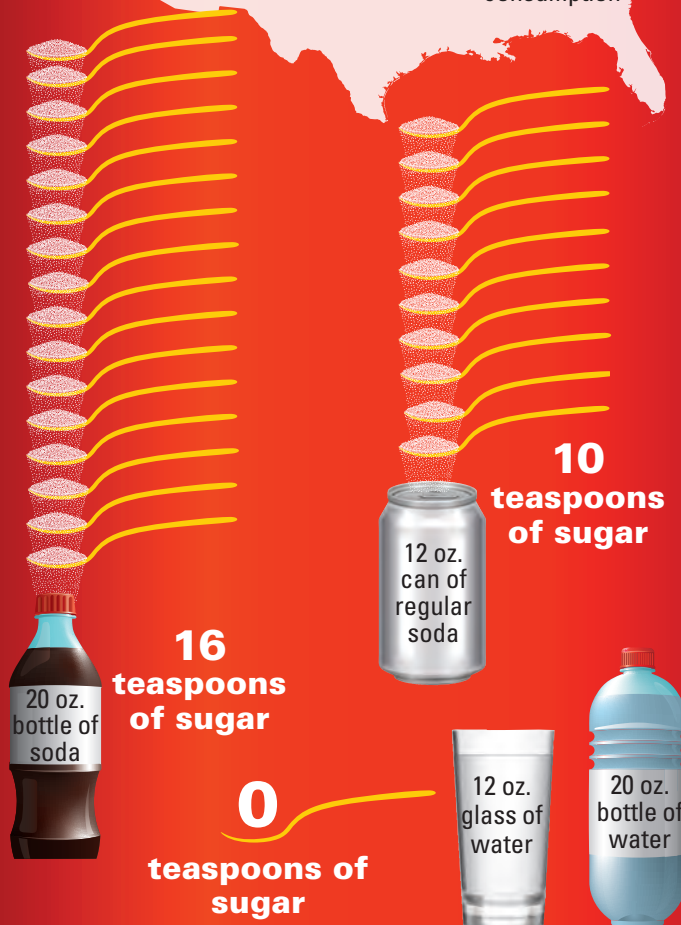
cases of soft drinks sold in 2013

**48%** of Americans drink at least 1 glass of soda a day

Out of 100 U.S. cities, Boston ranked **#93** in soda consumption



### Sugar Content in Beverages



### Soda versus Milk

#### Average American's Consumption of Soda and Milk

**1966**  
**20 gallons** of soda  
**33 gallons** of milk

**2010**  
**45 gallons** of soda  
**20 gallons** of milk



### Sugar Stats for Children and Young Adults

Teenage boys drink **868 cans** of soda every year in the U.S.

**40%** of American preschool children drink an average of **9 oz. of soda** every day (equal to 7.5 teaspoons of sugar)

An average American child drinks two **12 oz. cans** of soda every day (equal to 20 teaspoons of sugar)

**57%:** school beverage sales in Massachusetts that were from sugared sodas, sports drinks, and juices in 2004

**2012:** year Massachusetts implemented legislation banning soda and sports drink sales in schools

# Canning Tooth Decay



# Good Taste in Toothpaste

When it comes to cleaning your teeth, the phrase “just brush it off” is good in one sense only, and that is for getting rid of plaque, not putting off the process. Brushing our teeth is imperative for keeping our mouths healthy, and that’s why it is good to have a simple and solid routine for taking care of our much-loved “dents.” The classic and ever-pertinent rule of thumb is to brush at least twice a day for two minutes with toothpaste that contains fluoride, which helps defend against cavities and even repair some teeth that have cavities already beginning to form. Toothpaste helps make tooth enamel, the hardest substance in our bodies, grow even stronger to resist tooth decay and cavities. Even if you buy your toothpaste in the natural food aisle or a health store, it is still essential that it contain fluoride. Thankfully, there is a type of toothpaste for everyone—it’s just a matter of deciding which brand and flavor are best for you.

Beginning with the little ones, it is good to keep in mind that tooth decay becomes a threat as soon as teeth begin to show. Therefore, it is important that parents start by gently brushing their baby’s teeth twice daily with a soft-bristled toothbrush and a fluoridated toothpaste. Parents may wonder, though, how much toothpaste is the right amount for their child? According to the American Dental Association (ADA), children three years old or younger need only a “smear” or rice grain size of toothpaste, and kids ages three to six need only a dab the size of a pea. Parents should also make sure that children know to spit out any excess toothpaste so as to not swallow it. To help children (and let’s be honest, some adults) look forward to brushing their teeth, toothpaste manufacturers sell toothpaste in a variety of flavors. For those who are not crazy about mint unless it is in ice cream, there are also brands of toothpaste that come in fun and kid-friendly flavors, like strawberry and bubblegum.



## Something for Everyone

Considering adult teeth, the last thing you want is a visit from the tooth fairy. It is common for oral complications to arise as we grow older; fortunately, there are toothpastes that handle a broad spectrum of dental issues. Adults are not immune to tooth decay, which is why using toothpaste with cavity-fighting fluoride is still key. But toothpaste also provides other benefits, such as helping to prevent gum disease, making smiles brighter, and desensitizing teeth and gums.

One issue we all contend with is plaque, which, when allowed to build up on the tooth surface, causes cavities and tooth decay. If plaque remains on teeth, it begins to harden and turn into tartar, which can make it difficult to keep your teeth clean and may lead to gingivitis and gum disease. That’s why you’ll find

many toothpastes specifically aimed at tartar control. The chemical compound pyrophosphate found in tartar-control toothpaste obstructs the plaque-hardening process and prevents tartar development.

Another concern for many people is the appearance of their smile, and that's why store shelves are lined with toothpastes that help to whiten teeth. The truth is, all toothpastes help remove surface stains through the action of mild abrasives, according to the ADA. But whitening toothpastes have added gentle chemical or polishing agents, such as silica or hydrogen peroxide, that polish and erase stains on tooth enamel. It should be noted, however, that these products do not change the color of teeth because they can only remove stains on the surface.

Tooth and gum sensitivity is also an issue for some people. Sensitive teeth may be caused by cavities, cracked teeth, worn tooth enamel, or exposed tooth roots, and gum sensitivity can occur as the result of tooth whitening or overzealous flossing. Thankfully, there are toothpastes that help desensitize and reduce discomfort. These toothpastes contain compounds that help block transmission of sensation from the tooth surface to the nerve. However, it should be noted that several applications are required before sensitivity is reduced.

For those who are environmentally conscious or living a more holistic lifestyle, there are a variety of natural toothpastes available for helping to keep their dental routines green, even when it comes to whitening. Natural toothpastes are made with naturally derived ingredients, such as fluoride to fight cavities, silica to whiten tooth surfaces, and aloe to soothe sensitive teeth and gums. Many of these natural toothpastes have made their way to supermarket and drugstore shelves.

Lastly, prescription toothpastes are available for those particularly susceptible to specific conditions, such as high rates of tooth decay, extreme sensitivity, and periodontal (gum) conditions. If you think your teeth need more than what you can find on a store shelf, talk to your dentist. He or she can best advise you on the toothpaste that's right for your oral condition.

## Seal the Deal

So, clearly there are many types of toothpaste from which we can choose, and trying to find trustworthy toothpaste can be a confusing task with all of the competing brands out there. But rest assured, there is something to look for in the way of product assurance: Try to find brands that have the ADA Seal of Acceptance. To gain the merit of the ADA Seal of Acceptance, a product must prove that it is safe and that the user will actually experience its advertised effects. It's also worth noting that *all* toothpaste products certified by the ADA Seal of Acceptance contain fluoride. When it comes to recommended toothpaste purchases, the Seal seals the deal.

As self-sufficient as teeth may seem, they still require some tender loving care to stay glimmering and healthy. This is why it is good to keep oral morals by brushing regularly with the right toothpaste for our dental needs. As long as we do this, our teeth will be happy, and it is only when our teeth are happy that we can continue to bite into steaks and chomp into snow cones. Many wise philosophers have said that if you love something, you should let it go. This is not the case with our teeth.





**Anyone can have your back.  
We have your smile.**

*To find a dentist, visit*  
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