

Inside This Issue

- 1 Little-Known Ways to Prevent Cavities
- 2 How to Teach Kids Internet Safety
- 3 Benefits of Using Eco-Friendly Dental Products
- 3 Motivation Doesn't Work
Tasty Spinach Artichoke Dip
- 4 Happy Dental Hygienist Month!

IT'S DENTAL HYGIENIST MONTH!

3 Ways You Can Say 'Thank You'

Dental hygienists are the gatekeepers of oral health. They are the ones who perform cleanings and in-depth exams, take X-rays, educate patients on oral health, and more. If you have any questions about improving oral hygiene, they are your go-to experts.

Because of the incredible work of dental hygienists, doctors can spend time on implants, crowns, and repairing cavities. If you think about it, dental hygienists are the third hand for doctors – dental offices wouldn't run efficiently without them!

In honor of April being Dental Hygienist Month, here are a few ways to thank them during your next visit.

Thank You Cards

You don't have to do anything grand to say thank you. A card with some kind words inside will do the trick. Your local supermarkets and other stores may have dozens of cards you can pick from. There are even cards specifically made for essential workers!

Practical Gifts

We all have a wish list of items that would help us a ton at work, but we have yet to purchase them. The same goes for dental hygienists! Perhaps they need scrub caps, a new pair of scrubs, utensils, and other items. You could also



purchase a gift card for them. But before deciding on a gift, please contact the office to confirm that gifts can be accepted.

A Verbal 'Thank You'

A simple gesture can go a long way. Simply telling your dental hygienist thank you after your appointment will brighten their day.

We can't thank our dental hygienists enough for their fantastic work. Their efforts don't go unnoticed by our office or our patients. Thank you for everything you do!



HOW TO PROTECT YOUR KIDS FROM CAVITIES

Brushing and Flossing Aren't Enough!

Welcome to part one of our four-part series tackling the biggest dental problems that affect kids! Like I said back in February, we're going to start with the issue most parents *think* they already know about: cavities.

I say "think" because cavities – or "early childhood caries," as we dentists call them – are much more complicated than most parents realize. For example, many people don't know you can get cavities in three different places: on the biting surface of your tooth, between your teeth, and on the smooth front or back of your tooth. Brushing and flossing are great **first steps** toward preventing all three types of cavities, but they aren't the only things your kids should do to keep their smiles safe!

As you might have experienced first-hand, your kids can still end up with cavities even if you brush their teeth twice a day and help them floss. Don't beat yourself up about it! Instead, try these three things to save your kiddos from the painful, damaging cavities that could impact their ability to eat, sleep, and perform well in school.



The child on the left has well-spaced teeth, while the child on the right is at risk of cavities!

1. Make sure your child's primary caregiver has great oral health and few/no cavities. I know it sounds crazy, but cavities are actually contagious. A cavity is a bacterial infection, so if you have cavities and blow on your child's food to cool it down, you could pass the bacteria on to them!

You may need to ask your parents, in-laws, and/or babysitter for their dental history to keep your kids safe from cavities, but the tough conversation will pay off! Once, I treated a child who often had cavities even though her parents had excellent teeth. At age 6, she switched babysitters and the cavities disappeared!

2. Don't let your child nap or sleep with their bottle. If your child develops cavities on the smooth front or back surfaces of their teeth, their bottle could be the cause! When kids fall asleep with their bottles or sippy cups in their mouths, prolonged exposure to the milk, juice, or soda in the bottle can cause cavities. Those fluids are highly acidic and eat at the surface of the teeth. (Ideally, you shouldn't have juice or soda in those bottles at all.) Even letting your kids sleep with a sippy cup of water can be problematic, so I'd suggest banishing bottles from bed altogether!

3. Monitor your child's diet – and not just for sugar. Many parents assume that if their kids don't eat sugar, they're safe from cavities. Unfortunately, candy isn't the only culprit! Any food made from

fermentable carbs can have a similar effect in the mouth because saliva breaks those carbs down into sugars. That means milk, cheese, bread, cereal, and oatmeal can cause cavities. You don't need to cut your kids off from carbs, but they may need to cut back on them, rinse their mouths out with water afterward, and brush and floss more carefully.

If you do all three of those things *and* make sure your kids brush and floss regularly, you should be able to protect them from cavities. Brushing prevents cavities on the smooth and biting surfaces of the teeth, while flossing prevents cavities between the teeth. (Pro Tip: Kids should have gaps between all of their baby teeth! If your child's teeth touch, they'll need to floss even more carefully. I recommend sitting on the floor and having them lay in your lap while you help them floss.)

There's one more cause of cavities I didn't touch on: mouth breathing. But that's a topic for a future newsletter! Until then, follow the steps I laid out and schedule checkups for your kids at Great Smiles every six months. I'll see you at the next one!

To your great smiles and better health,

It's Time to Stream!

Internet Safety 101

Technology surrounds us now more than ever. There are always new apps in the app store, new games, and countless social media posts. Today, we also see children spending more time on the internet. But using these platforms comes with risks and responsibility – is your child ready to navigate them?

Talk to your child about online dangers.

Before giving your child permission to use the internet or buying them a smartphone, they must understand the different types of online dangers. There are many harmful things on the internet your children do not need to see. Talk to them about phishing, piracy, obscenity, online predators, cyberbullying, revealing personal information, and how people may not be who they say they are.

Set standards and boundaries for internet/phone use.

What sites are they allowed to get on? Which social media programs are they allowed to visit? Is there any information you would want them to keep private? How long or often can they be on the internet? Don't wait until something terrible happens to begin implementing online safety rules. Make guidelines proactively for your children to follow so they know what is expected of them.

Encourage your children to talk to you.

Unfortunately, around 60% of kids claim they hardly talk to their parents about what they're experiencing online. Therefore, your children must know

they can come to you instead of hiding their concerns. Remember that your child may fear you'll be angry with them if something questionable happens, so keep an open mind and understand your child's situation. This will encourage them to come to you more often if a problem occurs.

By implementing an open line of communication, informing them about the dangers of the internet, and setting boundaries, your child will have all the tools they need to safely use the internet and social media. Be aware of what they are doing and check their phones periodically. However, if you would like more resources on how to teach your child about internet safety, you can find tons of information online!



GO GREEN!

With Eco-Friendly Dental Products

Eco-friendly products are biodegradable.

Typical dental products are made with polyethylene and nylon, which aren't biodegradable. Because of this, they can take many years to decompose. Luckily, eco-friendly dental products exist, like biodegradable, compostable, and plastic-free toothbrushes made of bamboo.

You'll experience a more natural clean.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study has shown how the plastics in non-eco-friendly dental products can negatively impact the reproductive system of lab animals they were applied to. Studies are still being conducted to see if those chemicals affect humans similarly. In the meantime, choosing environmentally friendly dental products made from mineral clay, sea salt, and plant extracts can help you avoid potentially harmful plastics found in many dental products.

Furthermore, many types of mouthwash are made with fake dyes, artificial sweeteners, preservatives, and other chemicals. Eco-friendly mouthwashes avoid synthetic chemicals and only contain all-natural and non-toxic ingredients.

If you're interested in purchasing eco-friendly dental products, you can find them at your local supermarket or buy them online. For more information about environmentally friendly brands and items, go online and search for "zero waste" dental products.



When you go to the supermarket or drug store, you'll come across many environmentally friendly products. But did you know you can use eco-friendly dental products? Not only are they good for oral health, but they're also great for the environment! Here are three reasons to choose eco-friendly products for your oral health.

You can reduce plastic waste.

All the products you use for your oral health routine – toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash, and floss – come in plastic bottles and containers. Although it's recyclable, the plastic in your dental products cannot be recycled – they are sent straight to a landfill or dumped in our waterways. So, look for brands advertising sustainability on the packaging.

MOTIVATION ISN'T ENOUGH

How to Create Healthy Habits

"I'll complete this task when I feel motivated." You may have told yourself or heard others say this sentence more times than you can count. Unfortunately, motivation alone will not help you fulfill your goals or complete your tasks. You aren't going to "feel" motivated every day, so choosing what to do and not do based on a feeling will only get you so far.

But not all hope is lost! There is something you can do to help you complete all of your daily items and goals.

Instead of relying on motivation, create habits that will get you into the routine of conducting and completing different activities. Habits are extremely powerful and can shape our lives either positively or negatively – depending on the habits we create. We can have routines that support our values and goals or practices that don't, making life harder than it should be.

Creating healthy habits is essential because the next time you don't "feel like it," it won't matter – you'll have a schedule and routine to ensure tasks will be completed. The best way to stick to your goals and values is to make healthy habits.

How do you create healthy habits?

Before you can create new routines, you first need to be aware of the habits you have now. What do you typically do when you want to finish something but don't feel like doing it? What do you usually say to yourself? Once you can identify your trends and patterns, you can start changing your thinking and actions.

Developing a healthier routine doesn't happen overnight – it takes time, patience, dedication, and testing. Therefore, it's best to start small and make progress each day. You can change one habit at a time until completing that task is second nature. Then, modify another habit until your routine is filled with actions that align with your goals and values.

So, the next time you're not feeling motivated and want to skip or delay one of your tasks, don't! You made a routine and created healthy habits, and now it's time to stick to them. Even when you don't feel like doing something, do it anyway. You may be surprised by how productive you'll feel.



Tasty Spinach Artichoke Dip

Inspired by DinnerAtTheZoo.com



Ingredients

- 8 oz spinach leaves
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3/4 cup chopped marinated artichoke hearts
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- Sliced bread, crackers, or tortilla chips for serving

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Coat a small baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a medium pan, steam or sauté spinach until wilted. When spinach cools, ring out excess water, then chop coarsely.
3. In a large bowl, mix cream cheese, sour cream, spinach, artichoke hearts, garlic, salt, pepper, Parmesan cheese, and 3/4 cup of mozzarella cheese.
4. Spread the mixture onto the prepared baking dish. Top with remaining mozzarella cheese.
5. Bake for 20 minutes or until the dip is bubbly. Turn the oven to broil and cook for an additional 2–3 minutes so the cheese will begin to brown.
6. Immediately serve with bread, crackers, or tortilla chips.

Take a Break

