

UNITED CONCORDIA® DENTAL
Protecting More Than Just Your Smile®

September 2019

Oral Wellness Newsletter

Hello everyone, here's our September Oral Wellness newsletter for you to share. Just use the "forward this email" button in the top corner. Or highlight a few selected articles, then copy and paste them wherever you like. Enjoy!



Why your gum health matters

It's a fact. There's a direct connection between the health of your mouth and the health of your whole body. Dental problems like gum disease can complicate chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and rheumatoid arthritis. And those conditions can make it harder to manage your gum health.

Gum disease is common, but largely preventable. Around [75% of Americans](#) have some form of it. Gum disease happens when the bacteria in plaque cause inflammation of the gums, which can affect the areas that support your teeth. As untreated gum disease progresses to periodontitis - a more serious condition - it can even lead to bone and tooth loss.

Since September is National Gum Care Month, now's the time to evaluate your oral health and take steps to treat or prevent gum disease, especially if you have any chronic medical conditions.

Some United Concordia Dental plans even include Smile for Health®-Wellness, a special program that provides enhanced benefits to help people with certain chronic conditions to better treat their gum disease.

[Find out](#) if you're eligible for Smile for Health®-Wellness

How to spot gum disease

Are your gums red, swollen or tender? Do they bleed when you brush? Are they pulling away from the edges of your teeth?

You may be in the early stages of periodontal disease, called gingivitis. But don't panic. It's likely reversible at this point with the right care.

3 steps to proper gum care:

- **Floss once a day** - It's the most important thing you can do. Why? Flossing removes plaque that can build up on your teeth and lead to gum disease. Floss comes in many different types. Ask your dentist which one is right for you.
- **Brush gums 2X a day** - Gently brush over both your teeth and gums in a circular motion. This helps to massage your gums to keep them healthy and get rid of plaque that may not be noticeable.
- **Visit your dentist regularly** - Make sure to schedule a dental exam and cleaning at least once a year. Your dentist will check the health of your teeth and gums. When gum disease is caught early, prompt treatment can stop it from getting worse and minimize the damage. Your dentist will advise how often you need cleanings to keep your oral health at its best.

[Watch](#) our gum care video



Sept. birthdays take the cake

More people blow out the candles in September than in any other month according to data from the National Center for Health Statistics and the Social Security Administration. And if you were born on September 9, surprise! It's America's most popular birthday.

Sure, we all love to celebrate with cake, ice cream and other sweets. Considering that a slice of cake with buttercream frosting has upwards of 30 grams of sugar, don't let it sit on your teeth for long. Sugar feeds the bacteria in your mouth and produces acid, which can dissolve the enamel on your teeth and lead to cavities.

Your best defense against decay is to brush after eating. But if you didn't tote a toothbrush to the birthday bash, grab a bottled water and swish your mouth to rinse away the sugar.

Pumpkin-spice...toothpaste?

Love it or hate it, pumpkin-spice season is upon us. But if you happen to savor the flavor, sorry, you'll have to stick to lattes, pancakes and candles. Pumpkin-spice oral care products

aren't a thing - yet.

The good news is, fresh and canned pumpkin is tasty and good for your oral health. It has Vitamin A, which helps keep your gums healthy and builds your enamel, the hard outer shell of your teeth.

Try whipping up this delish and good-for-you smoothie. It's like pumpkin pie in a glass - only packed with calcium and fresh fruit, so you can enjoy it guilt-free. And according to WebMD, studies have found that cinnamon may reduce inflammation, have antioxidant properties and fight bacteria, too.

Pumpkin-Spice Yogurt Smoothie

- 1 frozen banana
- ½ cup vanilla Greek yogurt
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- ½ cup skim milk
- 2 tbsp. pure maple syrup
- 2/3 cup pumpkin puree (canned or fresh)
- 1 cup ice

Add ingredients into a blender. Blend on high until smooth. If drink is too thick, add more milk and thin to your desired consistency. Makes 2 smoothies.

Back-to-college knowledge

It's that time of year...your kids are back enjoying the freedom of campus life. While late nights, junk food and caffeine are part of the experience, these habits aren't the best for their oral health.

Here are 5 tips to subtly work into in your next convo.

1. Keep snacks healthy

Avoid tooth decay by keeping snacks generally healthy. Suggest low-sugar alternatives, such as nuts instead of chips or fruit instead of candy.

2. Replace soda with water

Soda may be okay every once in a while, but it contains acids that break down tooth enamel and sugar that creates cavities. A better option is to carry a reusable bottle and stick with water to stay hydrated.

3. Say no to oral piercings

It might be "in", but the truth is that face and tongue piercings can lead to gum recession, chipped teeth and infection. Skip the fad and enjoy a metal-free mouth!

4. Keep good oral hygiene habits

Students are on their own, but they don't have to lose the good oral habits they grew up with! Brushing and flossing every day leads to optimal oral health.

5. Take alcohol and smoking seriously

Drinking excess alcohol and smoking in any capacity does major damage to the whole body, including the mouth. Encourage students to drink responsibly and not smoke at all to avoid tooth decay, gum disease and discoloration, to say the least.

Your healthy tailgate playbook

Throwing a tailgate party is a fun way to add to the excitement of football season. By serving healthy food and drinks and staying hydrated, you and your fellow tailgaters can have fun while maintaining your oral health and overall wellness.

[Plan](#) a tailgate that won't sack your oral health



Oral care during cancer treatment

Thanks to advances in cancer treatment, more people survive cancer than ever. According to the [National Cancer Institute](#), nearly 14.5 million cancer survivors were living in the U.S. in 2014, and that number is expected to grow to nearly 19 million by 2024.

But you may not be aware of the toll cancer treatment can take on a person's dental health. There are often painful, frustrating side effects that can have both short- and long-term impact.

This September is National Cancer Awareness month for many cancers, including childhood cancer, gynecological and ovarian cancer, prostate and thyroid cancer, plus leukemia and lymphoma. In support of survivors going through or preparing to undergo cancer treatment, here are tips to help maintain your oral health.

[Tips](#) for mouth care during cancer treatment

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