

August 2022

Oral Wellness Newsletter

Hello everyone! Here's our August newsletter. To share it, just use the "forward this email" button. Or highlight the text you want, then copy and paste it wherever you like. It's that simple.



Book a back-to-school dental visit

Pens, pencils, paper, backpack. While you're checking off all those back-to-school essentials, don't forget to check if your child is due for a dental exam.

Routine cleanings and exams are just as important as getting a back-to-school physical. Your child's dental exam helps to prevent cavities, the most common chronic disease in kids and teens ages 6 to 19.^[1] An exam can also catch potential issues early when they're easier (and less expensive) to treat.

Cavities are caused by bacteria that break down food left on the teeth, creating acid that eats away at tooth enamel. Brushing at least twice and flossing once a day removes bacteria and helps keeps teeth cavity-free.

But what kid wants to stop playing to brush, especially during summer vacation? If you're tired of nagging, our Chomper Chums® app makes brushing and flossing a fun game. Kids get to choose a tooth-brushing buddy from our cast of animated characters. Each time they brush, they earn points to buy treats for their furry friend.

[Download our Chomper Chums toothbrush game](#)



HPV vaccines protect kids from cancer

In honor of National Immunization Awareness Month, United Concordia Dental is raising awareness about a vaccine that can actually help prevent oral cancer.

You've probably seen the TV commercials about HPV vaccines for kids. If you're wondering why HPV vaccination matters so much to your kids right now, it's about preventing certain cancers later in life. ^[2]

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that usually clears up on its own. But for others who don't clear the virus from their systems, HPV can lead to certain cancers down the line, including oral and cervical cancer. ^[2] That means, your child could be exposed to HPV at 16 and end up getting an HPV-related cancer in their 30s.

You may think your child is too young to get HPV. But preteens and teens can be exposed through contact with someone they don't realize has HPV.

Kids as young as 9 can get vaccinated, but the CDC recommends that boys and girls get HPV vaccines at ages 11 or 12. ^[2] In fact, your child can get the first dose of the HPV vaccine during the same visit they get vaccines to protect against meningitis and whooping cough. ^[2] So talk to your pediatrician about adding it to your child's regular vaccination schedule.

[Get deeper info on HPV vaccines](#)



What your oral health reveals about your overall health

Of course, dentists make sure your gums and pearly whites are healthy and clean—but that's not all they do. Since oral health problems can be a sign of other illnesses, dentists can also

alert you to potential issues with your overall health. Here are six health concerns that can be detected during a routine exam.

1. GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease)

GERD happens when you bring up stomach acid while you're sleeping. This digestive disease regularly washes teeth in acidic saliva, causing them to [crack, crumble or wear away](#). Your dentist can spot damaged teeth and recommend what to do next.

2. Liver or kidney problems

Chronic bad breath? [Bacterial overgrowth in the stomach](#) can cause halitosis – another term for bad breath – if your kidneys and liver don't eliminate toxins properly. Infections like sinusitis or pneumonia can also cause bad breath. Talk to your dentist if you can't freshen it up, even with toothpaste, mints and mouthwash.

3. Gluten intolerance or celiac disease

Canker sores may be a [symptom](#) of gluten intolerance, which is the body's inability to process foods made with wheat, rye and barley. If you've had unexplained canker sores, your dentist can shed light on whether gluten could be to blame.

4. Diabetes

Diabetes can cause loss of taste, cavities and gum disease. In prediabetes, blood sugar is borderline high and can lead to yeast infections in the mouth, which show as white patches. [Treating gum disease](#) can help diabetics better control their blood sugar, slowing the disease's progression.

5. Stress

Grinding your teeth (bruxism) can cause headaches, plus muscle, jaw and neck pain, leading to worn or fractured teeth. [Temporomandibular \(TMJ\) disorder](#), a problem with the hinge connecting the jawbone to the skull, can also cause pain. Both conditions can be triggered and worsened by stress.

6. Hormonal issues

Pregnancy, perimenopause and menopause throw hormones off-kilter and can make gums sensitive and bleed more easily. Often, dentists notice this during routine cleanings. But if your gums bleed regularly, mention it. That way, your dentist can determine if it's gum disease or hormone-related.



Happy National Fresh Breath Day!

If you struggle with keeping your breath smelling minty and fresh or find yourself popping in mints often, don't give up just yet! Although bad breath can be embarrassing and frustrating, the good news is practicing proper oral hygiene can quickly put that problem to rest for good.

[Find simple fixes for bad breath](#)



Tooth sensitivity means you have tooth decay.

FALSE! If your teeth are sensitive, it doesn't necessarily mean you have a cavity.

And if you DO get a cavity, you may not experience tooth sensitivity at all.

There are various causes of tooth sensitivity, including exposed roots due to receding gums and side effects from teeth whitening. If your teeth seem extra sensitive, check with your dentist to find out the cause.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov); 2019.

2. [HPV \(Human Papillomavirus\)](#); [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov); August 2, 2019.

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