

September 2020

## Oral Wellness Newsletter

*Hello everyone! Here's our September newsletter. The content is easy to share - 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.*



### Making masks fun for kids

Grownups understand that wearing face coverings helps stop COVID-19 from spreading. But how do you persuade a preschooler to keep a mask on and not toss it in the sandbox?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that kids 2 and older wear face coverings indoors or anytime they're within 6 feet from other people. Getting youngsters to do as they're told can be challenging, but here's some tips that may help:

- **Make sure it's comfy**  
A loose, scratchy mask won't last long on a little face. The AAP says soft, pleated masks typically fit small faces better, and ear loops are easier to use than ties. Make sure your child's nose, mouth and chin are covered.
- **Transform a favorite T-shirt**  
Turn a tee that's gotten too tight into a no-sew mask. A bandana or even worn-out jammies work just fine as long as the fabric is tightly woven cotton. All you need are scissors and 2 rubber bands or hair ties. Check out this [easy how-to video](#) from the CDC.
- **Get crafty with decorations**  
Let your kids get creative with colors and patterns. Pick up fabric paint or pens, and

even stickers at your local craft store. Personalizing their own masks can help give kids a sense of control over a somewhat scary situation.

### [Get more mask safety tips for kids](#)



### **Book a back-to-school dental visit**

Pens, notebook, laptop. 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.

Regular cleanings and exams are important to help prevent cavities, but home care matters, too. Brushing at least twice and flossing once a day removes bacteria and helps keep teeth cavity-free. While cavities are the most common chronic condition in kids 6 to 19 years old<sup>[1]</sup>, brushing and flossing are also essential for younger kids. Teaching your child how to care for their teeth early helps to instill good habits and prevent other issues.

If you're tired of nagging your kids, our [Chomper Chums®](#) app makes brushing a fun game. Kids 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](#)



### **Afterschool snack attack? Serve this**

Back-to-school looks a little different this year. Your kids might be attending classes online, or heading to campus a few days a week and staying home the rest. Either way, you're probably looking for some quick snack ideas that are easy to whip up and healthy to eat. We have you covered!

Your kids will love this yummy bean dip that's good for them, too. Beans are high in minerals and fiber and help keep them full until dinnertime.<sup>[2]</sup> Plus, using crunchy veggies to scoop up this dip will help scrub plaque from their teeth.<sup>[2]</sup> It's a win-win!

### [Get the recipe](#)

**Serves 10**

#### **Ingredients:**

¼ cup water

1 ½ cup canned beans, drained and rinsed (pinto, cannellini or great northern)

1 clove garlic (minced)

¾ tsp. coarse salt

¼ cup fresh herbs, chopped (any combination of parsley, chives, basil, dill or mint)

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

#### **Directions:**

Add all ingredients to a bowl and combine with a fork or potato masher.

Serve with the sides of your choice. Try whole grain crackers or carrot, celery or cucumber sticks.

Brought to you by [Diabetes Food Hub](#)

#### **Nutrition per serving**

35 calories | 7g carbs | 2g protein | 120mg potassium



## **Caring for your mouth after dentures**

Wearing dentures or partials to replace lost teeth doesn't just give you a bright new smile. Dentures and partials help you chew and talk normally again, plus make your face look fuller.

You likely know to care for your dentures by rinsing, brushing and soaking them daily. But it's important to take proper care of your mouth and gums, too.

- **Make sure they still fit right**

Over time, dentures can loosen and rub your gums and cheeks, causing tenderness and mouth sores. If you have pain, or if your dentures move when you eat or talk, have your dentist check them.

- **Don't skip regular dental exams**

Even if your dentures feel comfortable, you still need regular visits to keep your mouth healthy. The dentist will evaluate your dentures, examine your mouth and gums, plus check for oral cancer.

- **Practice good daily oral care**

Take your dentures out and rest your gums for 6-8 hours a day. Clean and massage gums using gauze, a soft washcloth or a soft-bristle toothbrush. Brush and floss any natural teeth, and clean your tongue, cheeks and the roof of your mouth. If you use denture adhesive, don't leave any on your gums.

[Learn more about oral health for seniors](#)



## September is Healthy Aging Month

This yearly occasion focuses on the positive sides of growing older – and there's lots to look forward to. Carolyn Worthington, editor-in-chief of *Health Aging*® Magazine and creator of Health Aging Month, says it's never too late to find a new career, sport, passion or hobby – or work on your health issues.

When it comes to oral health, one problem that affects older adults is xerostomia, or dry mouth. Nearly 1/3 of adults over 65 have dry mouth<sup>[3]</sup> – a condition that's typically treatable with the help of your dentist.

Dry mouth happens when your glands don't make enough saliva. Just like it sounds, your mouth may feel dry and sticky all the time. You may have symptoms such as bad breath, and a hard time talking, eating, swallowing and even smiling. Lack of saliva can also lead to a higher risk of cavities and gum disease, so it's important to learn your treatment options

Dry mouth can be a side effect of many medical treatments like chemotherapy or head and neck radiation.<sup>[4]</sup> It can also be a symptom of diseases such as Sjogren's syndrome or diabetes.<sup>[4]</sup> Dry mouth can also be caused by many prescription and everyday medications such as ibuprofen or cold remedies. Find out if your medications are on the list.

[See medications that may cause dry mouth](#)



## Is your dentist on your cancer care team?

If your treatment plan includes chemo or radiation, you may show side effects in your mouth. Your dentist can help care for any oral complications caused by the new medications or therapies you need.

Chemo and radiation stop or slow cancer cells from growing, but they can also harm healthy new cells.<sup>[5]</sup> Besides breaking down oral tissue, these treatments can upset the good balance of bacteria in your mouth, leading to cavities, sores and infection.<sup>[5]</sup> Radiation can also damage the glands that make saliva, which rinses food and other cavity-causing debris off of your teeth.

Your dentist and oncologist can work together to help you deal with oral complications. Relief for side effects may include home remedies, prescription medications and in-office dental treatments – your care team will map out a plan with your specific needs in mind.

Treating existing dental problems before your cancer treatment starts can help prevent oral side effects – and lessen their severity. You may be advised to fix cavities or broken teeth first and address signs of gum disease. Once your cancer treatment is underway, you'll want to keep up with brushing and flossing regularly to keep your mouth and teeth clean.

Proper home care is essential keeping oral complications in check, so make sure to talk to your dentist if you have any concerns.

[Get tips for dealing with oral side effects](#)

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[Lea en Español](#)

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

[2] The Benefits of Beans and Legumes; [American Heart Association](https://www.heart.org); April 26, 2018

[3] Aging and Dental Health; [ada.org](https://www.ada.org); July 2, 2019

[4] \*Xerostomia; [Oral Cancer Foundation](https://www.oralcancerfoundation.org); 2019

[5] Oral Complications of Chemotherapy and Head/Neck Radiation (PDQ®)-Patient Version; [National Cancer Institute](https://www.nccn.org); April 26, 2019

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