



# IMPRESSIONS

Vol. 11

Connection to the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services

Summer 2020

## What is a Dental Emergency?

Since March 16, 2020, the American Dental Association has called on dentists nationwide to postpone non-urgent dental procedures to help slow the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).



Source: Getty Images

Concentrating only on emergency and urgent dental care allows dental offices to care for emergency patients and reduce the burden that dental emergencies would place on hospital emergency departments.

Below is a link to the American Dental Association's (ADA) guide to what you can reschedule for a time when your dentist has resumed normal operations, and what you should consider an emergency. If you are unsure whether your situation counts as an emergency, call your dentist's office.

They can help decide if you need to be seen immediately. If you need help finding a dentist, contact the Delaware State Dental Society at 302-368-7634.

For guidance on dental emergencies, [click here](#). For more information about how COVID-19 is impacting dental appointments, visit [ADA.org/coronavirus](https://ada.org/coronavirus).

## A-Z Scavenger Hunt

One of the most challenging parts of being confined to our homes is coming up with new ways to keep ourselves and our children entertained and learning. One great activity for families to do together is a scavenger hunt. Get your quarantine crew ready to search out the following items in or around your home and see who can find them all first!

- ☐ **Apple**—Apples are a healthy snack for teeth, and their crunchy skin actually helps clean your teeth as you chew them.
- ☐ **Bug**—Just like the insects we sometimes see inside or outside of our homes, dental educators often refer to the germs that cause cavities as sugar bugs!
- ☐ **Clock**—It is important to stick to regular meal and snack times.
- ☐ **Dog**—Pets need their teeth brushed, too! If you do not have pets, a picture of a dog in a book or a stuffed animal is acceptable.
- ☐ **Eraser**—We can think of our toothbrushes as erasers of plaque and bacteria on our teeth!
- ☐ **Floss**—Floss is a waxy string that cleans between our teeth where toothbrushes can't reach.
- ☐ **Glasses**—Do you remember a time you when your dentist wore safety glasses to care for your teeth?

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## A-Z Scavenger Hunt (cont.)

- ☐ **Headphones**—Listening to music or singing your favorite song for two minutes is a good way to make sure you've brushed long enough.
- ☐ **Ice**—Ice is great in a glass of water, but not for crunching! Chewing ice can cause teeth to wear down or crack.
- ☐ **Jewelry**—Jewelry is okay, but your smile is your best accessory!
- ☐ **Ketchup**—Even though ketchup comes from tomatoes, it has a lot of sugar in it.
- ☐ **Luggage**—Luggage can be anything you pack up for a trip! What do you take for your teeth when you stay away from home?
- ☐ **Mouthwash**—Swishing with mouthwash is a powerful addition to brushing and flossing. For kids to use mouthwash, they should be at least 6 years old and able to spit well.
- ☐ **Notebook**—Quarantine is the perfect time to start a journal! .
- ☐ **Orange**—Can you find an orange object in your house? When germs sit on the teeth for too long because of improper brushing, they turn orange.
- ☐ **Pillow**—In some cultures, children who lose teeth place them under their pillow and a prize is found in its place in the morning!
- ☐ **Queen** (in a deck of cards)—A full deck of cards is 52. A full set of adult teeth is 32.
- ☐ **Radio**—In the early '70s, some believed that radio broadcasts could be picked up in dental work such as gold and silver (amalgam) fillings.
- ☐ **Soap**—It's important that we remember to wash our hands throughout the day, especially when returning from outside, after using the bathroom, and before eating, brushing, or flossing.
- ☐ **Toothbrush**—Can you point out a toothbrush in your house? Unless it is your toothbrush, do not touch it. Toothbrushes can carry many germs and should never be shared.
- ☐ **Umbrella**—Just as umbrellas shield us from rain, we can help to shield our teeth from sugar and acid in drinks by sipping them through a straw.
- ☐ **Vitamins**—Vitamins are specially formulated for the bodies of children and adults. Fluoride is a natural vitamin for our teeth that helps us fight cavities.
- ☐ **Windows**—Count how many windows you have in your home. The mouth is like a window into the body, showing early signs of illness or malnutrition.
- ☐ **Xylitol**—Xylitol is widely used as a sugar substitute. It has less calories and does not raise blood sugar. Can you find this ingredient listed on any of the foods in your house? (Hint: it is commonly found in sugar-free gum or candy!)
- ☐ **Zipper**—The interlocking pieces of a zipper are called "teeth!"

Submit a picture of you and/or your family completing a part of the scavenger hunt for a chance to win a prize. Send submissions to [gena.riley@delaware.gov](mailto:gena.riley@delaware.gov). Happy hunting!

## Nutrition in the New Normal

Many of us are adjusting to being at home instead of at work and maintaining productivity and deadlines despite home-schooling. In this stressful and unprecedented time, it is no surprise that our eating habits are changing. Some used to a structured work environment with set lunch and break times may now be within an arm's reach of the fridge or the pantry, with an unwavering urge to eat and drink tempting us all day from our new workspace of the kitchen table. Children experiencing school or daycare closures are susceptible to extra snacking, too. Mindless eating, stress eating, and emotional eating are natural responses to interrupted routines brought about by stay-at-home orders during a global pandemic. However, if you are snacking and drinking more often, be mindful that, depending on what you're consuming, those extra calories are setting you up for weight gain, health problems, and tooth decay. Before you put your cabinets on "lock-down," follow these strategies to snack healthily.



### Remember the 20 minute rule

It's no surprise that there is a strong link between tooth decay and sugary, acidic drinks such as soda and juice. Each time you take a sip of a sugary drink, your teeth experience a 20-minute acid attack. Sugar in soda combines with bacteria in your mouth to form acid, which harms teeth. Each attack lasts about 20 minutes and starts over with every sip of soda you take. While you are under one of these acid attacks, your risk for cavity development is highest. By constantly exposing your teeth to sugary sources (sipping on your soda, juice, or coffee all throughout the morning instead of just drinking it all down with your breakfast), you are keeping yourself in this high-risk phase and increasing your risk of tooth decay.

These ongoing acid attacks weaken tooth enamel. Kids and teens are most susceptible to tooth decay because their tooth enamel is not fully developed.

Keep in mind that there are many other beverages with high sugar content, such

as iced tea and sports drinks. A clever way to remember this concept is the tag line, "sip all day, get decay," originated and made popular by the Minnesota Dental Association. Water is the best choice for drinking throughout the day. Other beverages higher in sugar should be limited to mealtimes only.

### Consistency in Meals

Even though much of our daily routine may have changed, it does not have to affect our usual eating patterns. Sticking to a normal and designated eating schedule of three meals daily can reduce hunger and snacking between meals. Avoid the urge to skip meals or limit eating, which often leads to over-eating later. Make sure your meals contain a balance of protein, healthy fats, carbohydrates, and vegetables to leave you feeling satisfied.



Source: Getty Images

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## Nutrition in the New Normal (cont.)

### All Snacks are Not Created Equal

Choose snacks high in protein and healthy fats. Protein and fat are important to keep you feeling full and satisfied throughout the day. Snacking on carbohydrate-based foods, like chips or pretzels, may leave you feeling hungry shortly after and get stuck in the grooves of teeth. Some tips include adding a scoop of peanut butter to your fruit, having healthy portions of cheese or meat, and dipping veggies in hummus or Greek yogurt. Replace the not-so-healthy food items you crave with slightly healthier versions to lessen the risk of indulging. Frozen yogurt is a healthy alternative to ice cream. Popcorn is better than pretzels, which are better than chips. If you have a sweet tooth, dark chocolate squares or chocolate-covered almonds are a better choice than gummy bears.



Source: Getty Images

### Keep Your Hands Busy

Boredom is often a source of snacking. By engaging in projects that keep your mind and body busy, you are less likely to resort to eating as a source of entertainment. Knitting, puzzles, and coloring books are all good activities. A simple Google search can yield hundreds of additional suggestions.

### Keep Up with Hygiene Through Quarantine

Proper brushing can prevent new decay and stop minor decay from becoming worse. It also helps prevent gingivitis and gum disease. Brush for at least two minutes twice a day. Be gentle and use soft bristled brushes when possible. Vigorous brushing can irritate your gums and wear down your enamel. Use a fluoride-containing toothpaste and mouth rinse to fortify your teeth. Remember to brush the backs of your teeth and the area along the gum line. Don't forget to floss, too! Dental floss removes food particles and plaque from the small spaces between your teeth. Be sure to clean the sides of both teeth that surround a space, rather than simply inserting the floss into the space and quickly pulling it out. Even if you're not leaving your house most days, brushing your teeth as part of a regular morning and evening routine will boost your health and your mood.

### Be Kind to Yourself

Not even the most practiced healthy eaters may be equipped for the stressors of life in quarantine. Understand that not every day will be perfect. Cut yourself some slack but get back on track. If you have a bad first half of the week, finish strong going into the weekend. We are all in this together, and together we can emerge stronger.

## Oral Health and Mental Health

Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2019 showed that almost two-thirds of people with depression reported having a toothache in the last year. Half of all people with depression rated the condition of their teeth as fair or poor. A scientific review of related studies found a strong link between periodontal disease and mood conditions, including stress, distress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. People with these conditions sometimes lose focus on oral health habits, which can lead to significant dental issues. Depression, for example, can cause people to brush and floss at irregular intervals, skip dentist visits, have unhealthy diets, and self-medicate with smoking or alcohol.



Source: Getty Images

Depression and anxiety cause the body to release a hormone called cortisol. As cortisol levels increase, the immune system weakens. This leaves you vulnerable to gum inflammation (gingivitis) and gum disease (periodontitis). In addition, medications prescribed for depression and anxiety can cause dry mouth. This lack of saliva can mean that food debris, plaque, and bacteria are not getting rinsed from teeth easily, which makes it easier for cavities to form. Anxiety, in particular, tends to be associated with several oral health issues. If you have anxiety, you're more susceptible to canker sores, dry mouth, and teeth grinding (bruxism). Such issues may be attributed to a lack of oral care or be side effects of anxiety medication.

### Depression During Quarantine

Previous studies involving mandatory quarantine have shown psychological effects that include anger, confusion, anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional exhaustion, irritability, and feelings of frustration and helplessness, among others. To help ease these effects, consider the following:

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## Oral Health and Mental Health (cont.)

● **Make plans.** Come up with plans to safely obtain groceries, supplies, and medications. If you cannot go to stores, try online shopping or use delivery services. Local state, community, and religious outreach programs can help with supplies if you are experiencing financial hardship. If you take prescription medications, consider moving them to insurance-based home delivery services. If this can't be done, some local pharmacies offer free delivery.



Source: Getty Images

● **Limit media.** Avoid spending too much time in front of the television, on computers, or on cell phones. News stories can deepen feelings of hopelessness and despair when you live with depression. Studies suggest that a quick update in the morning each day (about 15 minutes) will give you enough daily information to stay safely informed.

● **Use mindful words.** It is easy to fall into negative thinking during quarantine. Try shifting your words to "I'm safe at home" instead of "I'm stuck at home." Being resilient during trauma requires a cognitive shift. Choosing positive words can redirect your perspective from helpless to hopeful.

● **Mix up your daily routine.** Try new recipes in the kitchen, rearrange your furniture, and have outdoor days for walks or gardening. Think of ways to structure and separate your days in different ways to avoid getting stuck in a rut. No matter what the day brings, don't forget to brush twice a day for two minutes each. Taking care of your oral and overall hygiene is a good way to boost your mood and immune system and safeguard your mental health.

● **Stay connected.** When you live in quarantine, ordinary days can be monotonous and frustrating. It's helpful to socialize with friends and family outside the household virtually or by phone, or to chat with a neighbor (at safe distance, of course).

If you live with depression, it's especially vital to follow your treatment plan. Make sure you take your medication daily, tend to self-care, sleep and eat well, exercise, use holistic approaches to ease depressive symptoms, and keep any scheduled telemedicine therapy sessions. To avoid having a relapse, tell your mental health provider if you're having a difficult time.

Additional sessions can be scheduled and treatment plans can be adjusted. Source:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/two-takes-depression/202004/how-manage-depression-during-quarantine>

For more information on mental health resources in Delaware, visit <http://delaware211.org/index.php/mental-health> or dial 2-1-1.

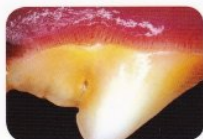
## Pet Dental Care

If you have a pet, you have probably spent a lot of time with it lately. Maybe you've noticed that its breath isn't so fresh and its teeth aren't as white. Bad breath can often be a sign of dental or overall health problems in animals. At least once a year, your veterinarian should check your pet's teeth for early signs of problems and to keep your pet's mouth and body healthy.

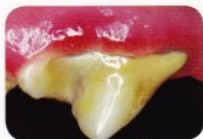
### How clean are your pet's teeth?

Approximately 80% of dogs show signs of gum disease by age three\*

Periodontal disease has been linked as a risk factor to heart, kidney and liver problems in dogs and cats.



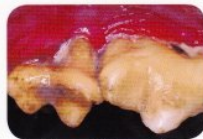
Stage 1: Gingivitis



Stage 2: Early periodontal disease



Stage 3: Moderate periodontal disease



Stage 4: Advanced periodontal disease

Source: <http://www.veterinaryhealthcareofnorthaugusta.com/dentistry.html>

Although cavities are less common in pets than in people, pets can have many of the same dental problems that people can develop, including broken teeth and roots, gum disease, abscesses or infected teeth, cysts or tumors in the mouth, misalignment of the teeth, broken jaws, and palatal defects (cleft palate).

Periodontal (gum) disease is the most common dental condition in dogs and cats. Most pets display signs of gum disease by the time they are 3 years old. Gum disease can progress quickly if intervention does not happen. Early detection and treatment are critical and can prevent your pet from potentially losing his or her teeth.

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## Pet Dental Care (cont.)

Just like in people, gum disease in pets can trigger more than just problems in the mouth. Other health problems found in association with periodontal disease in pets include kidney, liver, and heart muscle changes. It starts with plaque that hardens into tartar. Tartar above the gumline can often easily be seen and removed, but plaque and tartar below the gumline is damaging and sets the stage for infection, inflammation, and damage to the jawbone and the tissues that connect the tooth to the jawbone. Have your pet's teeth checked soon if you observe any of the following problems:



Source: Getty Images

- Bad breath
- Broken or loose teeth
- Extra teeth or retained baby teeth
- Teeth that are discolored or covered in tartar
- Abnormal chewing, drooling, or dropping food from the mouth
- Reduced appetite or refusal to eat
- Pain in or around the mouth
- Bleeding from the mouth
- Swelling in the areas surrounding the mouth

Some pets become irritable when they have dental problems, and any changes in your pet's behavior should prompt a visit to your veterinarian. Always be careful when evaluating your pet's mouth because an animal in pain may be more prone to biting.

The treatment of periodontal disease involves a thorough dental cleaning and x-rays and anesthesia may be needed to effectively diagnose and manage the disease. Your veterinarian or a board-certified veterinary dentist will make recommendations based on your pet's overall health and the health of its teeth and provide you with treatment options. Some animal clinics throughout the state may offer reduced prices for dental exams and cleanings.

To help keep your pet's mouth healthy, establish some of these healthy habits as owners:

- **Take your dog in for regular oral exams and cleanings.** Oral exams with dental X-rays done under general anesthesia are the only way to get a full picture of what's happening in your dog's teeth and below the gum line.
- **Brush your dog's teeth every day.** While the job may seem difficult, products designed for pets such as finger cots and flavored toothpaste help make this task easier. **Never use human toothpaste or oral hygiene products on pets.**
- **Feed your pet quality pet food.** Some pets will benefit from "dental diets" that help scrub their teeth as they chew, or from foods that have additives that prevent plaque from hardening. Talk to your vet about what diet is right for your pet.
- **Offer safe toys and treats for daily chewing.** Chewing every day on tooth-friendly goodies is another way to help prevent gum disease in pets. Look for treats and toys that are not hard, such as rubber balls, thin rawhide strips that bend, and rubbery toys in which you can hide treats. To prevent fractures and broken teeth, avoid hard treats of any kind, such as animal bones (raw or cooked), nylon bones, or cow and pig hooves.

For more information on dental care for pets, visit the American Veterinary Medical Association's website at [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).