

March 2022

## Oral Wellness Newsletter

*Hello everyone! Here's our March 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.*



### Celebrate Your Dental Professionals!

So it's National Dentist's Day on March 6, and Dental Assistants Recognition Week is March 6-12! Even if you don't have an appointment this month, take the opportunity to thank these important people who work so hard to keep your mouth healthy.

These recognition events bring awareness to dentistry so that people will know more about how to care for their teeth and encourage those who may have avoided going to the dentist to get a checkup.

#### Pioneers of dentistry

Did you know the first recorded dentist dates back to 3000 BC? Hesi-Re, an Egyptian, is known as the very first tooth expert. We don't know much about him, but practices such as cleaning teeth and using herbal drinks to relieve gingivitis and inflammation are documented.

In 1866, Lucy Hobbs Taylor was the first woman to receive a DDS. Emeline Roberts Jones was the first woman to serve as a "dental assistant" in 1855. She practiced alongside her husband, who likely had no formal dentistry education, to fill teeth. She ran the practice when he died and eventually served on the Woman's Advisory Council of the World's Columbian Dental Congress and as a member of the Connecticut State Dental Society.

American Orthodontics Society, [7 Amazing Facts About Dentists](#), July 14, 2021.



## Good Nutrition Supports Good Teeth

Not only during National Nutrition Month, celebrated each March, but every day of the year—a nutritious diet is an essential part of good oral health and whole-body health. A good diet includes nutrient-dense foods from the major food groups: lean proteins, whole grains, healthful fats and lots of fruits and vegetables. Things like minimizing sugary foods, sodium and trans-fats will help keep your body—and mouth—in good shape.

Among the top benefits of a healthy diet are heart health, reduced risk of cancer and strong bones and teeth. One of the most important nutritional supplements to your teeth is calcium. It's the most abundant mineral found in the human body, making it an essential building block of our anatomy. Of this supply, 99% supports the bones and teeth.

Adults need about 1,000 mg of calcium, or three to four glasses of milk daily. Adults with average dietary needs typically require 1,000 mg of calcium each day, but postmenopausal women may need an additional 200 mg. Not everyone likes milk, and some cannot tolerate it or drink enough of it to meet daily calcium needs. But plenty of alternative foods can supplement daily calcium intake, including yogurt, cheese and dark-green, leafy vegetables. You can also try drinking calcium-fortified juices or soy milk.

This guide shows healthy options you can enjoy guilt free and those that you might consider consuming in moderation or avoid.

### [Good \(and not so Good\) Diet Choices for a Healthy Mouth](#)



## Need a Sleep Apnea Wake-up Call?

Sleep apnea is a serious health problem that can lead to heart disease, diabetes and other medical issues. Unfortunately, nearly 80% of sufferers don't know they have it<sup>[1]</sup>.

With sleep apnea, your breathing stops suddenly during the night – sometimes hundreds of times.<sup>[2]</sup> And those pauses can last up to 30 seconds long!<sup>[3]</sup>

When you stop taking in air, the oxygen level in your blood drops and your heart rate slows. Once you start breathing again, your heart beats faster and your blood pressure rises. These erratic changes make your heart work harder and less efficient at pumping blood.

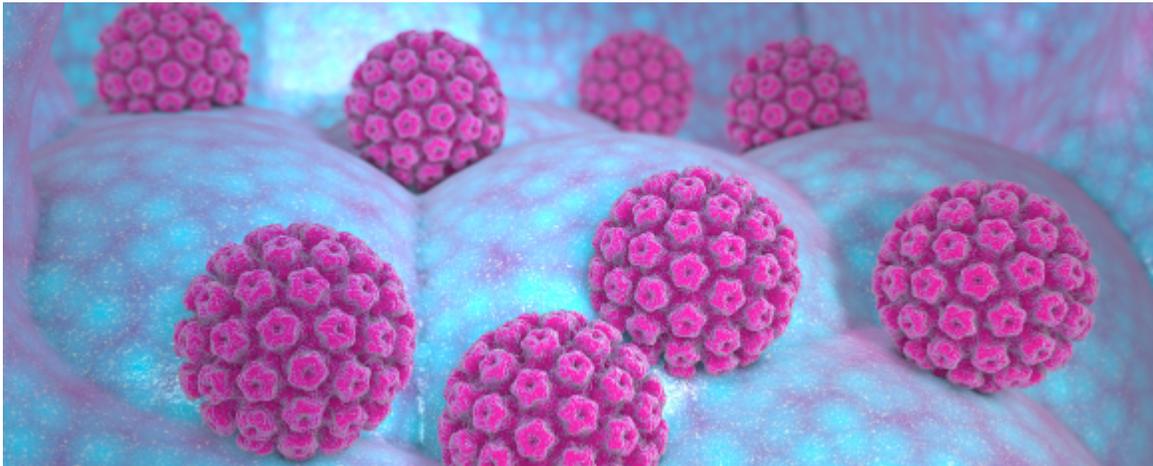
Sleep apnea can also affect your oral health. A recent study shows that sleep issues can weaken the immune system and boost the risk of gum disease<sup>[4]</sup>. Sleep disorders are also linked to inflamed gums, which may increase the risk of heart disease. People with sleep apnea often wake up with a dry mouth, which can lead to cavities and gum disease.

To see if you could have sleep apnea, take this quick self-assessment quiz. Just answer 8 yes-or-no questions that'll evaluate whether your risk is low, intermediate or high risk. Your results will be emailed to you so you can share them with your doctor if needed.

[Take the 60-second sleep apnea quiz](#)

#### Sources

1. [sleepapnea.org](https://sleepapnea.org); 2021.
2. [my.clevelandclinic.org](https://my.clevelandclinic.org); [Sleep apnea](#); March 2020.
3. [hopkinsmedicine.org](https://hopkinsmedicine.org); [4 Signs you might have sleep apnea](#); 2022.
4. Sleep disorders and oral health: a cross-sectional study; [Clinical Oral Investigations](#); 2017.



## HPV and the Risk of Oral Cancer

International HPV Awareness Day, held every year on March 4 by the International Papillomavirus Society, is an opportune time to recognize the connection between human papillomavirus (HPV) and oral cancer. It's among the top risk factors for developing mouth or throat cancer.

And people who are diagnosed with HPV-related head and neck cancer actually tend to be younger and nonsmokers. HPV-positive oral cancers are often diagnosed at a later stage because they develop in difficult-to-detect areas. According to the American Dental Association, these cancers develop in the throat or at the base of the tongue, near the tonsils. The HPV vaccine works best when given before any exposure to HPV, so the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends HPV vaccination](#) for 11- to 12-year-olds (and everyone through age 26, if not vaccinated already).

Early diagnosis is associated with the best outcomes, and regular dental check-ups that include an examination of the entire head and neck can be vital in detecting cancer early. Be sure to see your dentist if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms for more than two weeks:

- Mouth or throat sore that won't heal
- Lump or mass in your cheek or neck
- White or red patches on the tonsils, mouth, tongue or gums
- Tingling or numbness in the mouth or tongue
- Loosening or pain around your teeth
- Consistent bad breath, weight loss or voice changes

[Learn more](#) about HPV and oral cancer.

[MouthHealthy™](#), top 5 Risk Factors for Oral Cancer, American Dental Association, accessed February 2021.



## Tooth or False?

Sports drinks are better for your teeth than soft drinks.

### **FALSE**

While both sports drinks and soft drinks are tasty, they are each packed with sugar and acids that aren't good for your teeth.

Infused water is the perfect alternative to sweet thirst quenchers. You can mix and match your favorite fruits, veggies and herbs, like lemon, berries, cucumber, or mint, to create your own personalized flavor. While the ingredients are tasty, most of the health benefits come from the water itself. It's been shown to increase metabolism, improve digestion and boost your mood and energy levels.

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