

grin![®]



SNOW DAYS:
how to keep cozy
and stay smiling

OIL PULLING
and oral health

How to maintain
HEALTHY SLEEP
DURING WINTER

WORLDWIDE
WINTER SPORTS
you won't believe

winter 2024

in this issue of grin!



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grin! more

Visit the *Grin!* website for more ways to keep your smile healthy. View web-exclusive content, videos, and more!



NEWS + RESEARCH

Your genetics and your smile

Ever wonder why your dentist asks about your family history? Discover how your DNA can put you at higher or lower risk for cavities, gum disease, and other oral health issues.



A loose permanent tooth could be a sign of trauma to the tooth or another oral health issue.

WELLNESS + NUTRITION

Loose tooth guide

Loose teeth are a wiggly rite of passage, but sometimes they cause a bit of pain. Here's how to reduce the discomfort at home — and when you should go see the dentist.



Looking for reasons to smile?

Access the digital version anytime at grinmag.com or by scanning the QR code.



ON TOPIC WITH DR. DILL

Dental products that protect young smiles

Joseph Dill, DDS, is Delta Dental's Chief Dental Officer. With more than 35 years of experience in the dental field, including 10 in private and public health practice and 20 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

There's nothing better than seeing your child smile. You can keep that smile bright and healthy for years to come by using the right oral health items at each stage of development!

<p>BABIES</p>	<p>Daily oral health begins before your child's teeth even come in. At this stage you won't need much to keep your baby's mouth clean and hygienic, just fresh washcloths so you can clean your baby's gums after each feeding. Make sure there aren't any loose threads that could get caught in your baby's mouth.</p>		<p>Your baby's first visit to the dentist should be within 6 months from when their first tooth appears, or by age 1, whichever occurs first.</p>
<p>EARLY BABY TEETH</p>	<p>Baby teeth usually begin to appear at around 6 to 12 months. To care for baby teeth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a soft-bristled baby toothbrush, one that is small enough to fit in their mouth comfortably. • Use a very small amount of fluoride toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice. Any flavor is fine, so get whatever your child likes best! 		<p>Fluoride is vital for lifelong oral health. If your tap water is not fluoridated, ask your dentist whether you should use a fluoride supplement.</p>
<p>TODDLERS</p>	<p>As your child grows, the color and flavor of their oral health products can keep them excited about cleaning their teeth. Let your child choose their favorite flavor or color of toothpaste, just as long as it still contains fluoride.</p> <p>You'll also want to purchase floss, floss picks, or a water flosser once your child's teeth fit closely together, typically between the ages of 2 and 6.</p>		<p>Replace your child's toothbrush every three months, or sooner if it begins to fray.</p>
<p>AGE 6 AND OLDER</p>	<p>The transition from baby teeth to permanent teeth usually begins around age 6. Keep these tips in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the age guidelines on the toothbrush you buy and make sure it has a small head that fits your child's mouth. • Get a well-fitted mouth guard and other necessary protective gear when they are ready to play sports. 		<p>Dental sealants protect your child's back teeth from decay. They are typically placed on 6- and 12-year molars soon after they come in. Talk to your dentist about the right time to apply them.</p>

Shield small smiles from bacteria

Maintaining oral health is a lifelong process. Use the right dental products at each stage of development and set your child up for a lifetime of healthy smiles!

MOUTH-FRIENDLY RECIPE

Super Buddha bowl

Dig into this vibrant Buddha bowl, packed with fresh veggies and wholesome grains for a nutritious, satisfying meal that also benefits your oral and overall health.

Ingredients:

- Cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
- Red peppers, thinly sliced
- Cucumbers, peeled and sliced in chunks
- Avocado, sliced in half
- 1 ½ teaspoons sweet paprika
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 ½ teaspoons chili powder
- 1 ½ teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- Spiced quinoa
- Chickpeas, roasted
- Sunflower butter hummus
- Fresh spinach or power greens

Directions:

- 1 Combine all veggies in a large bowl and add spices. Let marinate for a few hours.
- 2 Assemble the Buddha bowl with fresh greens, marinated vegetables, quinoa, and chickpeas. Drizzle with sunflower butter hummus.
- 3 Enjoy!



HEALTHY HIGHLIGHTS

- Chickpeas** are full of protein that helps strengthen teeth
- Quinoa** contains minerals that strengthen tooth enamel
- Leafy Greens** support a healthy oral microbiome



How to maintain healthy sleep during winter

As winter rolls around, shorter days and longer nights can disrupt your natural sleep patterns, making it harder to maintain a healthy sleep routine. In this article, we will explore some simple strategies to help you stay well-rested throughout the season.

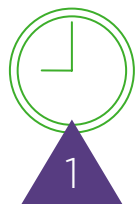
Sleep and your oral health

Sleep plays a significant role in maintaining good oral health. When you do not get enough rest, it can be hard for your body to keep up with life's everyday demands. Forgetfulness due to fatigue can lead to neglecting oral hygiene practices like brushing and flossing. Exhaustion-related stress can also contribute to oral health issues like teeth grinding.

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU NEED?

Adults 18 and older need at least seven hours of sleep per night. Children under the age of 18 need more than eight hours of sleep per night.

5 TIPS for maintaining healthy sleep



1

Have a consistent sleep schedule

Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day — even on weekends — helps regulate your body's internal clock. This consistency makes falling asleep and waking up naturally easier.



2

Keep your bedroom cool

Lowering the room temperature can enhance your sleep quality because it aligns with your body's natural dip in core temperature while sleeping.



3

Exercise regularly

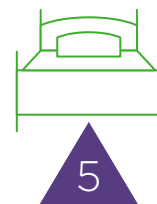
Doing at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise promotes restful sleep, helps you fall asleep faster, and alleviates daytime sleepiness.



4

Spend some time outside

Natural light helps regulate your sleep cycle, so do your best to spend time outside during daylight hours. If sunlight is scarce, consider using a light therapy box to simulate its effects.

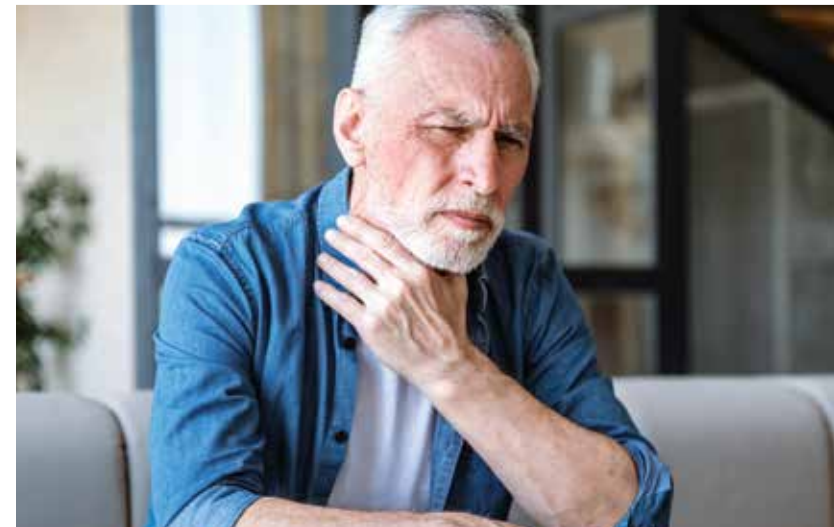


5

Avoid long naps

Napping too long or too late in the day can influence your night's sleep. To avoid your sleep schedule being disrupted, try to limit your naps to a half hour and only nap in the early afternoon.

By following these tips, you can maintain a healthy sleep schedule throughout the winter.



Readers ask, we answer

Glen asks:

“What are healthy ways to soothe a sore throat?”

Have a question you'd like us to answer? Send it to grin@deltadental.com, and it could be featured in an upcoming issue.

'Tis the season for scarves, snowflakes, and sore throats. Beyond the discomfort, a sore throat can negatively influence your oral health by causing dryness and increasing bacteria. However, there are tried-and-true remedies that can soothe your sore throat while also supporting your oral health.

Remedies to soothe your sore throat



Gargle with salt water

One of the most effective remedies is gargling with salt water. Mix about half a teaspoon of salt into a glass of warm water and gargle several times a day. This age-old method remains a reliable option for soothing throat discomfort.



Stay hydrated

Maintaining hydration is crucial when dealing with a sore throat. Warm fluids such as herbal teas, broths, and plain warm water keep your throat moist and alleviate irritation. Herbal teas, particularly those with chamomile or ginger, offer anti-inflammatory benefits that can further soothe your throat.

Hydration also helps wash away food particles and bacteria from teeth and gums, promoting good oral health. Drinking tap water, which usually contains fluoride, also helps prevent tooth decay.



Use a humidifier

Dry air can make a sore throat worse, especially in the winter. Using a humidifier in your room can add moisture to the air, helping to keep your throat from drying out and becoming more irritated. A personal vaporizer or breathing steam from a hot shower can also help soothe your sore throat. This remedy helps ward off dry mouth, which can lead to cavities, gum disease, and bad breath.



Rest

Don't underestimate the importance of rest. Allowing your body time to heal is as vital as any remedy. Rest, combined with the right remedies, will make your recovery much quicker.

By using these effective strategies, you can alleviate sore throat discomfort and ensure a smoother, more comfortable recovery. Take care of your oral and overall health this winter season.

!
While some sore throats will improve with at-home treatment, see your doctor if you have:

- A severe sore throat.
- A fever over 101 degrees that lasts longer than one day.
- If you have trouble sleeping or breathing because your throat is swollen.
- If a red rash appears.
- Red or white spots or pus in your throat.
- Swollen tonsils or lymph nodes.



SNOW DAYS:
how to keep cozy
and stay smiling

Winter weather can mean more time indoors, but there's plenty of fun to be had at home. Here are a few activities to pass the time while you boost your oral and overall health.



Play a little balloon tennis

It can be hard for active kids (and active parents!) to be cooped up inside. To burn off some energy — and to avoid breaking things all over your home — try playing balloon tennis!

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Create "tennis rackets" by attaching paper plates to rulers or popsicle sticks.
- 2 Inflate a balloon to use as a tennis ball.
- 3 Decide if you're playing one vs. one or dividing your family into teams.
- 4 Start the game and have some fun!

Laughing and exercising while you chase the balloon can help your oral health, too. It will cause your body to release endorphins, which help you feel relaxed and reduce teeth grinding.



Warm up with a homemade ginger & chamomile tea

The ginger in this drink helps slow the growth of mouth bacteria, supports a healthy immune system, and can reduce inflammation that contributes to gum disease.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups boiling water
- 6 bags chamomile tea
- 2 teaspoons freshly grated ginger
- 4 slices lemon
- 2-4 teaspoons honey
- 2 sprigs rosemary

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Mix the ingredients together in a large bowl or container.
- 2 Steep for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 3 Strain the tea to remove the tea bags, ginger, and lemons.
- 4 Transfer the tea to a pitcher and serve hot.



Make homemade snow globes

Looking for another fun and affordable way to keep your kids occupied? Make snow globes!

WHAT YOU NEED:

- One or more small glass jars
- Sandpaper
- Super glue or a hot glue gun
- Small items to put in the jar (typically toys or figurines)
- Glitter
- Optional: Glycerin to thicken the water*

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Sand the inside of the lid until the surface is rough.
- 2 Use super glue or a hot glue gun to stick the figurines to the inside of the jar lid.
- 3 Let the glue dry.
- 4 Fill the jar with water, leaving a little room at the top.
- 5 Add a pinch of glitter and a couple of drops of glycerin to the water.
- 6 Screw the lid on tightly, shake the snow globe, and enjoy!

Have you heard that no two snowflakes are the same? It's true. And the same goes for smiles, your smile is unique to you!

Continued from page 9



Cook a smile-friendly, tomato-free chili

When it's chilly outside, make chili inside! This recipe is tomato-free, which makes it less acidic and healthier for your smile.

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 oz. jar roasted peppers
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 teaspoons avocado oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, finely diced
- 1 medium yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 lb. extra lean ground beef
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 (15 oz) cans red kidney beans, drained

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Blend the roasted peppers and broth until smooth. Set aside.
- 2 Heat the oil in a pan on medium-high heat.
- 3 Sauté the diced onion, carrot, bell pepper, and garlic for about 5 minutes or until softened.
- 4 Add the ground beef and cook until browned.
- 5 Add the spices and cook for 2 minutes.
- 6 Add the roasted pepper sauce and drained beans and stir.
- 7 Increase the heat to high and bring the chili to a boil.
- 8 Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 9 Fill a bowl with chili, add your favorite toppings, and dig in!

Find more mouthwatering and belly-warming soups, snacks, meals, and desserts at grinmag.com.



The 28-day well-being challenge

Your oral, overall, and emotional health are impossible to separate. That's why this 28-day challenge helps you develop healthy, sustainable habits. By starting small and adding a new goal each week, you'll boost multiple areas of your well-being!



Oral health

A regular brushing and flossing routine is the foundation for healthy teeth and gums.

It's not just about your smile — maintaining your oral health is also tied to a reduced risk for overall health risks like stroke and heart disease. We'll start the challenge by keeping your smile healthy!

DAILY GOAL:

Brush twice daily for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste, and floss once.

Better sleep

Did you know the glow from cell phones, laptops, and TVs can throw off your sleep cycle? Limiting late-night screen time can help.

Improving sleep can reduce stress, improve memory, and helps you avoid teeth grinding (bruxism), which can crack your tooth enamel or cause headaches and jaw problems.

DAILY GOAL:

Your week 1 goal and avoid glowing screens at least one hour before you go to bed.

Improved nutrition

Experts recommend eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day, but only 10% of Americans reach that amount.¹ That's why this week's goal is about boosting your nutrition.

Berries and leafy green vegetables have vitamin C to support healthy gums.

DAILY GOAL:

Your weeks 1-2 goals and eat a fresh fruit and vegetable (or more!) each day.

Ease into exercise

Now that you're eating better and have more energy, let's add some exercise to the mix! You can walk, run, do jumping jacks while you watch TV, anything really — just as long as you're active.

If you need more structure for a workout, research online instructors and programs until you find the right one.

DAILY GOAL:

Your weeks 1-3 goals and exercise for 20 minutes three to five times this week.

Keep on keepin' healthy

All areas of your health are tied together — set small, achievable goals for different areas of your life to find balance and improve your overall well-being!

¹Deliso, M. Only 1 in 10 adults eating enough fruits and vegetables, CDC finds. (2022, January) from <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/10-adults-eating-fruits-vegetables-cdc-finds/story?id=82117939>

WORLDWIDE WINTER SPORTS you won't believe

During winter, Americans love sports and activities like skiing, hockey, and basketball. But how does the rest of the world stay active when the weather gets cold?



Snow polo

Snow polo began on a frozen lake in Switzerland in 1985, and the world championships are still held there each year. It's a fancy affair with gourmet food, majestic mountain views, and even more majestic horses. The game itself is played just like polo, except the horses wear specially fitted horseshoes that help them grip the ice.

Snow polo creates one oral health risk that isn't found in normal polo — chapped lips! If you'll be out in winter weather, make sure you bring lip balm with SPF 30 to protect your lips from the cold weather.



Yukigassen

This sport takes a childhood favorite — the snowball fight — and kicks it up a notch! Games are played between teams of seven players, and there are two ways to win:

- 1 Eliminating everyone on the other team with snowballs
- 2 Capturing the other team's flag

Yukigassen is popular all over the globe, with annual tournaments held in Finland, Norway, Australia, Japan, and many other countries.

Although Yukigassen seems like a childhood dream come true, it's still important to be careful and protect yourself. Dense snowballs, or ones that accidentally include ice, can lead to minor teeth, jaw, and face injuries.

If you do participate in any hard-hitting winter games, make sure to wear a mouth guard and take other recommended safety precautions. Mouth guards can protect you from cracked or broken teeth, cuts to your tongue and cheeks, and other damage.



Continued from page 13



Skijoring

From fast action to adorable animals, this Norwegian sport has a little bit of everything! Skijoring combines skiing with dog sled racing. Each racer wears cross-country skis and is pulled by an animal, most often three dogs or a horse, across an awesome outdoor obstacle course. Despite being a Norwegian pastime, skijoring can also be found close to home — the Whitefish Skijoring competition is held annually in Whitefish, Montana.

It's important to stay hydrated when you spend long periods of time outside, even in the winter when you aren't sweating as much. Hydrate with water, which is sugar-free and helps clean your mouth, instead of sweetened sports or energy drinks.



Snowkiting

Snowkiting is when a snowboarder is pulled along a course or along a trail by a wind-propelled kite. It's like waterskiing, except you do it over frozen ground instead of near a sun-drenched beach. A newer — and potentially risky — activity, snowkiting can be found in snowy countries such as Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Russia, and Canada, among others.

Make sure you know the risks before you try snowkiting! Thrill-seekers may love the adrenaline rush if they practice under careful conditions, but the sport is risky and can lead to head or jaw trauma from falls in the snow or from collisions with obstacles on the course.



Game on!

Winter is a sport and smile-filled wonderland — you just need to know where to look! Use safety equipment and maintain your oral health so you can keep playing and smiling all season long.

Your WINTER smile list



- 1 Put on some music and groove while brushing for two minutes.
- 2 Enjoy a Buddha bowl for a healthy and filling winter meal. Check out our recipe on page 5.
- 3 Turn the lights off an hour early and wake refreshed. See our article on page 6.
- 4 Get a jump-start on your New Year's resolutions. See our challenge on page 11.
- 5 Indulge in an old-fashioned snow day! Get inspiration on page 8-10.
- 6 Take an online class or tutorial on something you're curious to learn more about.
- 7 Serve a warm meal at a temporary housing community.
- 8 Check out your local library for some cozy reads.
- 9 Spread out a puzzle and piece it at your leisure.
- 10 Take a stroll and window shop during the holidays.



//////////////////// DENTAL TREND SPOTLIGHT //////////////////////
Oil pulling and oral health

Another oral health fad was recently trending on social media. But oil pulling is unique because it has actually been around for centuries!

Oil pulling is when you swish cooking oil (commonly sesame or coconut oil) around in your mouth for 15-20 minutes each day. Fans of the fad say it reduces mouth bacteria and whitens teeth, among other health benefits. But does oil pulling work? Let's take a closer look.

Oil pulling over the centuries

The practice of oil pulling was first used hundreds of years ago, to heal oral injuries in India and southern Asia. Back then, they used sesame oil and believed it could cure oral health issues such as:

- 
Bad breath
- 
Dry or cracked lips
- 
Sore or bleeding gums
- 
Tooth decay
- 
Throat ailments

The trend of oil pulling has risen and fallen in popularity over time, and it has even seen recent interest on social media. Today's version of the trend uses coconut oil instead of sesame oil, but otherwise it remains the same — swishing oil in your mouth for 20 minutes before spitting it out.



What are the potential benefits?

Supporters of oil pulling claim it has a wide variety of oral and overall health benefits, from reducing plaque to minimizing allergies and headaches.

Most of these health claims are unproven, but oil pulling may help fight plaque and gum disease if it is paired with a regular daily oral health routine.



What are the potential health risks?

Oil pulling can cause minor issues like an upset stomach from accidentally swallowing the oil or a strained, tired jaw from swishing for 20 minutes each day. More research is needed to determine whether oil pulling poses any long-term risks.

Our verdict: It's probably not harmful — but it's not recommended. Daily oil pulling will not whiten your teeth, and more research is needed to determine if it offers real oral health benefits. Instead, save time and keep your mouth clean the traditional way — by brushing twice and flossing once daily!

PPOs, DHMOs, and discount plans — oh my!

When you're shopping for dental and vision insurance, the jargon can be a little confusing. If you don't know the difference between PPO, DHMO, and other plan types, you're in the right place! Let's break down what the different plan types mean, so you can choose the right dental (or vision) plan for you.



3 out of 4 DENTISTS PARTICIPATE IN DELTA DENTAL'S NETWORK.



Learn more about our dental plans, many of which cover 100% of the costs for routine preventive checkups, at deltadental.com. In most states, you can also find vision plans from Delta Dental through DeltaVision.



Preferred (or Participating) Provider Organization (PPO) plans

Under this type of plan, members have access to a network of care providers. The care providers in this network accept reduced fees for covered services. This means members pay lower out-of-pocket costs by visiting an in-network dentist or optometrist.



Dental Health Maintenance Organization (DHMO) plans

With DHMO plans, the focus is on preventive care and establishing a "dental home," where patients must select a primary care dentist and receive care exclusively from within a particular network for procedures and treatments to be covered. The network of providers is smaller than the network in a PPO plan, but there is no deductible or annual maximum, and the overall plan cost is usually lower.



Discount plans

Under this type of plan, you pay an annual fee to receive access to a network of dentists who have agreed to receive lower fees. Under this plan, payment is due to your dentist at the time of service, but there are no additional deductibles, payments, or paperwork.

Weigh your benefit options
 It's important to have dental and vision coverage, both for preventive care and for emergency situations. Consider your current needs and budget and compare your plan options so you can choose the right one for you.



5
TIPS FOR
surviving digital eye strain

Let's face it: We spend a lot of time on our digital devices, whether it's on our phones, computers or tablets. Staring at screens all day can leave your eyes feeling dry, itchy, and tired. This discomfort, known as digital eye strain or computer vision syndrome, is common these days. But don't worry! There are five easy ways to give your eyes a break.

Screen usage and your health

Excessive screen time can cause irreversible damage to your eyes. Beyond eye health, too much screen time can lead to headaches, poor work performance, disrupt your sleep patterns, or cause poor sleep altogether.

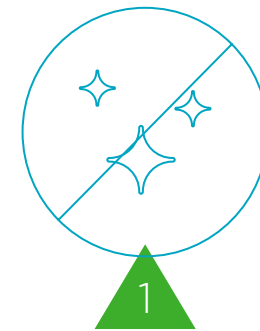


Schedule routine eye exams

Routine eye exams are important for detecting and addressing vision and eye problems early. Comprehensive vision exams can also detect several larger health issues, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, glaucoma, autoimmune disorders, and cancer. Because of this, it is recommended to get a comprehensive eye exam once a year if you are over 17 years old. However, your provider may suggest less frequent checkups if you are in perfect health.

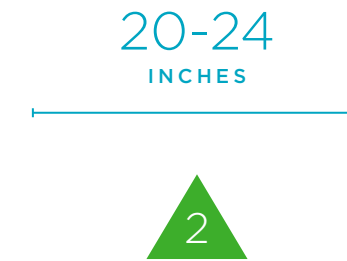


5 tips to avoid digital eye strain



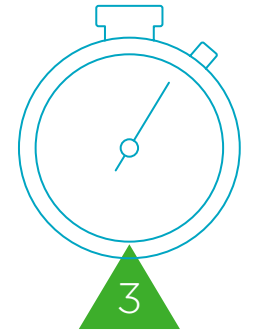
Use a screen glare filter

Screen glare filters, also known as anti-glare screen filters or privacy screens, reduce the reflection of light on digital screens. By minimizing light reflections, these filters reduce the eye discomfort and fatigue you experience when you look at a screen for too long.



Sit at a proper distance

Place your computer screen about 20 to 24 inches from your eyes, with the top of the screen at or just below eye level. This setup helps reduce strain on your eyes and neck, making your workspace more comfortable. This is especially important if you wear bifocal glasses.

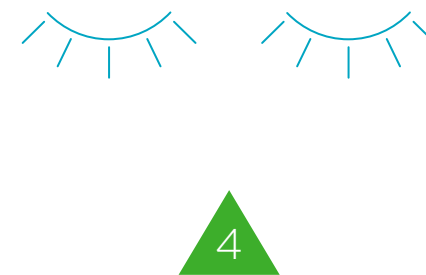


Follow the 20-20-20 rule

Here is a fun one: the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break and look at something 20 feet away. It's like giving your eyes a mini vacation. This simple trick helps your eyes relax and reduces fatigue.

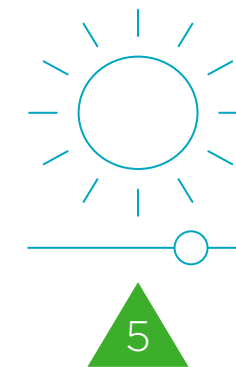


If you need vision coverage, Delta Dental offers it in many states. To see if your state has vision coverage, go to deltadental.com.



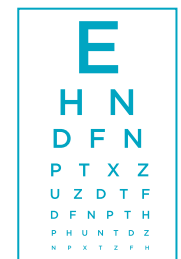
Blink more often

Did you know we blink less when we are staring at screens? That is one reason why our eyes can feel so dry. Make a conscious effort to blink more often to keep your eyes moist and comfortable. If your eyes still feel dry, consider using artificial tears or ointment at night to rehydrate them.



Adjust your screen settings

Adjust the brightness, contrast, and text size so that your screen is easy to read. Your screen brightness should match the lighting around you to reduce strain. And turning on night mode or a blue light filter in the evening can help protect your eyes and improve your sleep.



Taking care of your eyes today can prevent more serious issues down the road. By following these five easy tips, you can significantly reduce your eye discomfort. Enjoy your screen time safely.

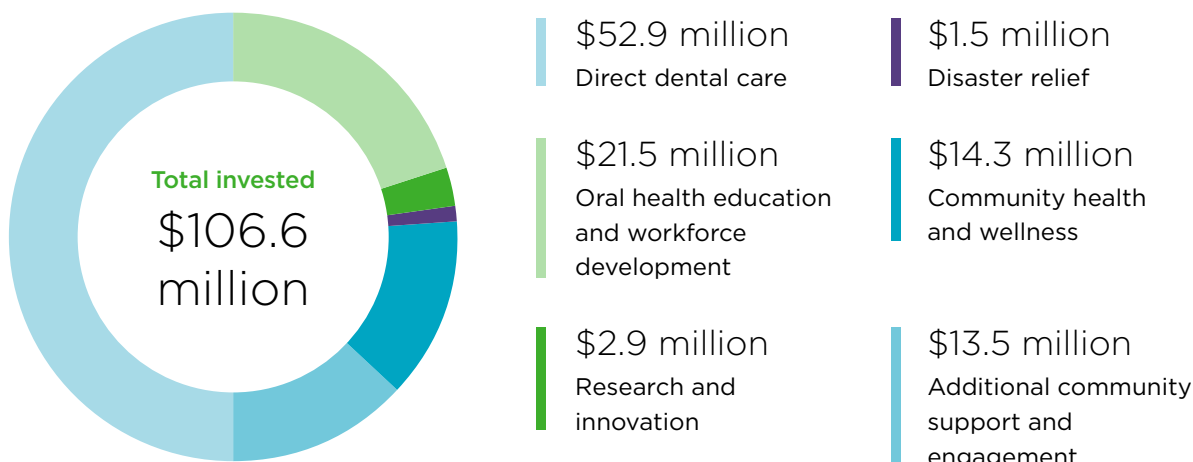


DELTA DENTAL INSTITUTE 2023 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

Over the last decade, Delta Dental has invested nearly \$2 billion to elevate health and wellness across the country. And each year, we issue an annual report that tracks our efforts to expand access to care, advance health equity, build resilient communities, and innovate for a healthier tomorrow.

Making sure we make a difference

In 2023, **Delta Dental impacted 16.2 million lives and invested \$106.6 million** to support local communities.



How has that funding supported oral health?

Delta Dental companies and their foundations helped communities in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. This funding supported:

- 1.7 million free or low-cost dental screenings and exams
- 200,000 free dental sealants for students
- Training, education, and workforce development programs
- The launch of a new campaign: Driving Greater Diversity in the Oral Health Workforce
- And much more!

Visit deltadentalinstitute.com/cir for more details about Delta Dental's community impact. You can even filter the report by state to see how we helped people near you!