

# Healthy eating for a brighter smile

Whether it's teeth whitening, liposuction or plastic surgery, "Hollywood" procedures have one thing in common: results that alter a feature you dislike. There's a way to get your smile in shape without surgery or special treatment—just healthy eating.

Did you know that teeth often become discolored because of what you eat or drink? Eating foods such as blueberries or drinking red wine and coffee can leave stains on your teeth. Foods such as strawberries, however, can naturally remove old stains and keep your smile bright.

## Here are some other healthy-eating tips for a naturally brighter smile:

- › Eat apples, pears, celery, carrots, cauliflower and cucumbers. They produce saliva that combines with the foods' natural fibers to clean teeth and remove bacteria.
- › Select raw veggies to clean your teeth and remove stains.
- › Drink from a straw whenever possible, allowing food dyes to bypass teeth.
- › Avoid drinking coffee, dark syrup sodas, and red wine.

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According to the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, whitening treatments are the most requested cosmetic dental procedure and have increased more than 300 percent since 1996.

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## Getting emergency dental care in a foreign country

### What do you do when your overseas vacation is interrupted by an aching tooth like you've never had before?

You can see any dentist. To be reimbursed for services by your group's HumanaDental plan, you need to pay the dentist in full.

When you return home, send us an itemized bill listing dental procedure and tooth numbers (ask the dentist for this information). If you receive major or periodontal services, make sure you obtain the necessary diagnostics—detailed narrative, X-rays, and periodontal charting—to receive the appropriate reimbursement based on your plan.

# Keep your gums healthy during pregnancy

Here's one more thing for an expectant mom's "to do" list: See your dentist for a checkup. The health of teeth and gums, which can be affected by pregnancy, may affect the health of your baby.

The increase in estrogen and progesterone levels during pregnancy causes gums to respond differently to bacteria in plaque. This reaction causes swelling, bleeding, redness or tenderness in the gum tissue.

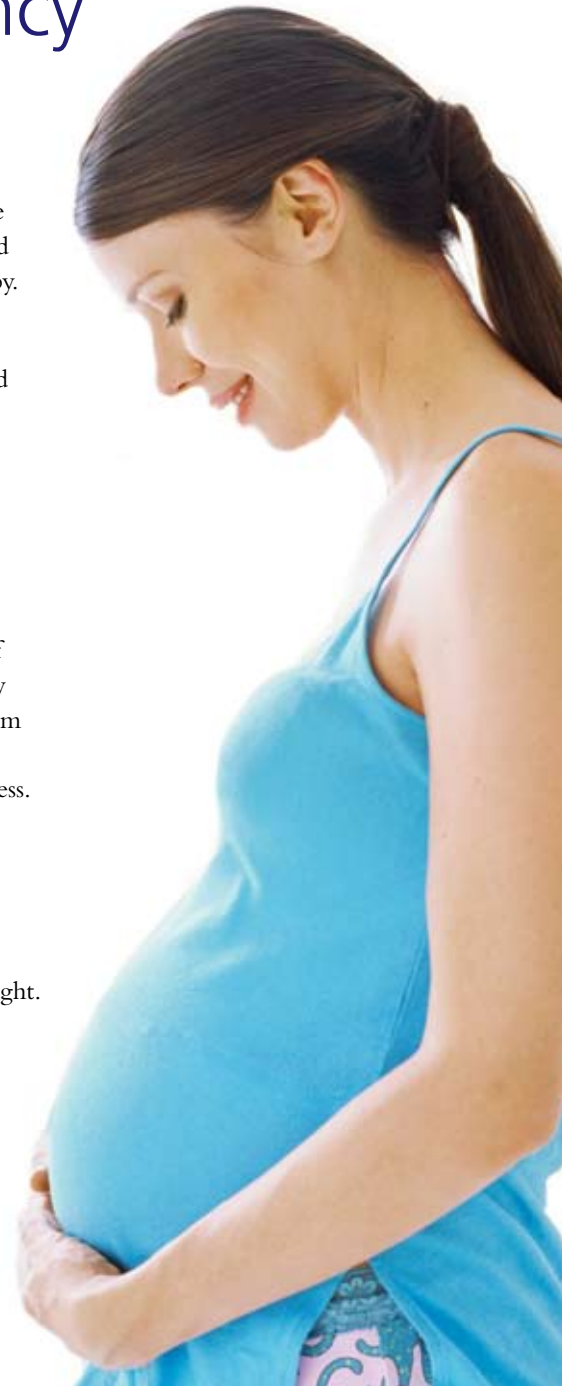
About half of women experience pregnancy gingivitis in the first or second trimester, and it can increase in severity through the eighth month, according to the American Academy of Periodontology. In some cases, gums swollen by pregnancy gingivitis may react strongly and form large lumps. These growths, called pregnancy tumors, are not cancerous and usually are painless.

During pregnancy, any infection, including periodontal infection, is cause for concern, the group says. Periodontal disease that develops or increases in severity can raise the chance of delivering a preterm baby with a low birth weight.

Because periodontal disease is often "silent," many women don't know they have it.

### To maintain good oral health:

- › Brush twice a day (at least two minutes) and floss daily.
- › Rinse with antimicrobial mouth rinse.
- › See your dentist.



## Drug linked to healing problems after oral surgery

Let your dentist know if you have used, are using or will use a bisphosphonate medication commonly prescribed to prevent or treat osteoporosis or as a part of cancer treatment.

Examples of oral bisphosphonates to treat osteoporosis are Fosamax (alendronate), Actonel (risedronate) and Boniva (ibandronate). Zometa (zoledronic acid) and Aredia (pamidronate) are intravenous bisphosphonates to reduce bone-related complications during cancer treatment.

Some complications with healing after tooth extractions and other oral surgeries have been reported among patients who have taken this medication.

Make sure you tell your dentist if you take these (and any other) medications, and let your physician know if you're planning oral surgery or extensive dental work.

Sources: American Academy of Periodontology and American Dental Association

