

Make it a good summer for your smile

Oral health maintenance doesn't get a vacation.

Some reminders for summer travel:

- When traveling abroad, brush your teeth with bottled water to avoid various microorganisms in foreign water supplies that could make you sick.
- Store your toothbrush in a travel container with air holes so bristles can dry.
- Eat a balanced diet and choose your munchies wisely. If you opt for sticky, sugary snacks and beverages, brush immediately after. If you can't brush, rinse your mouth with water or chew gum.
- Protect your lips with sunscreen.
- Carry emergency numbers for your dentist.

If you're away from home and need emergency care, you may want to look for a dentist who participates in the HumanaDental Network. Use DentistFinder on www.humanadental.com or call a customer service specialist at 1-800-233-4013.



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Researchers reaffirm safety of amalgam

Not enough evidence links dental mercury and health problems “except in rare instances of allergic reactions,” concludes the Life Sciences Research Office after reviewing seven years of scientific studies.

The American Dental Association said the report supports its position “that dental amalgam is a safe, effective material to fill cavities.” Amalgam has been used in tooth restorations for more than 100 years.

Plaque busting

You may have heard it both ways.

Always floss before you brush your teeth. No, floss after.

Both emerge as winners in this debate. What matters is that you use floss every day to remove plaque and food particles. This helps prevent tooth decay and gum disease.



Tart, refreshing and good for your teeth?



Cranberries may be one of the latest weapons against tooth decay and gum disease.

Cranberry juice, long touted as a healthy choice in beverages, appears to stop the bacteria that causes cavities and gum disease, preliminary research from the University of Rochester and elsewhere suggests.

In one study, two doses of a beverage with 25 percent cranberry juice stopped the bacteria from clinging by as much as 85 percent.

Retain your retainer

Your retainer attracts food particles, plaque and tartar just as your teeth do. Here are some tips for its care:

- Brush your retainer every time you brush your teeth.
- Keep your retainer in your mouth except for eating and sports, as your orthodontist directs.
- Store the retainer in its case whenever it's out of your mouth to keep it from getting lost or drying out.
- Avoid the temptation to flip the retainer around in your mouth or to pop it out to show friends. This can loosen the fit, or distort or break wires.
- Call your orthodontist's office for repairs if wires break or bend rather than trying to fix them yourself.
- Avoid exposing your retainer to hot water, sunlight, microwaves and radiators. Heat may warp plastic.

Your retainer is essential to hold teeth in their new positions after braces or to correct other mouth problems. Handle with care.