

# DENTAL HEALTH

## Online Dental Myths: Sorting Fact From Fiction

(NAPS)—Don't be "myth-led"—there are a lot of hacks and rumors out there around oral health. Not all of them are helpful and some may even cause harm. Here's a look at oral health fads gaining popularity on social media and a quick guide to what really works.

**Myth:** Using charcoal toothbrushes and toothpaste is a great way to whiten teeth.

**Fact:** While activated charcoal products can make teeth whiter in the short term, prolonged use of abrasive charcoal could lead to loss of enamel. To date, the American Dental Association (ADA) has not approved brushing with activated charcoal, and there are many other products you can purchase to safely whiten teeth. When you see the ADA Seal of Acceptance on a whitening product, you can be sure it has been scientifically evaluated to be safe and effective.

**Myth:** Non-sugar gum can actually be great for dental health.

**Fact:** According to the ADA, chewing gum helps you produce more saliva. As a result, when added to a regular routine of recommended oral care (brushing twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste and cleaning between teeth), sugarless chewing gum can contribute to reducing cavity risk.

**Myth:** Using baking soda as a toothpaste alternative works.

**Fact:** Though it has been shown to clean teeth, brushing with baking soda is not approved by the ADA. Brushing with baking soda alone will not provide you with the fluoride you need to help prevent cavities.

**Myth:** Cheese can help your oral health and lemonade can harm it.

**Fact:** The calcium in cheese and other dairy products is vital to the health of bones and teeth. Diets that provide three cups or the equivalent of dairy products per day can actually improve bone mass, and that includes your teeth.

Lemon juice, like many fruit juices, is acidic—so when you drink it, it can cause enamel erosion on your teeth. Lemonade has a pH level of 2-3, making it a very acidic drink. Liquids with a pH



### **Dentists advise against brushing your teeth with charcoal.**

level under four have been proven to be harmful to oral health.

**Myth:** You can use your hair as dental floss.

**Fact:** Dentists warn that flossing with anything other than dental floss or a water pick can lead to gum damage. So, it is not recommended that you use your hair to floss your teeth, even if it may seem like a good idea in a pinch. Instead, try a plastic-wrapped toothpick. Cleaning between your teeth with the proper tools may help prevent cavities and gum disease.

"The benefits of healthy teeth and gums go well beyond the ability to eat comfortably or smile with confidence. A healthy mouth translates into a healthier quality of life," said Dr. Greg Theis, DDS, MBA, vice president, dental services, Delta Dental of Wisconsin.

**Myth:** Expiration dates on dental products don't really matter.

**Fact:** Actually, they do. According to Crest, expired toothpaste doesn't harm you, but it does have less ability to prevent cavities and tooth decay. It's best to use toothpaste that hasn't reached its expiration date. Floss does not expire, but if it is mint flavored it may lose its taste.

**Fact:** Ultimately, the easiest dental health hack to keep your mouth healthy is to go to annual dental cleanings and check-ins. Most dental plans cover two cleanings per year.

"Keeping up on dental cleanings and check-ups has shown to be effective in the prevention, early detection, and management of oral and overall health issues," said Dr. Theis.