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# grin!®

news, notes &  
entertainment to  
keep your smile  
healthy & happy

spring  
2016  
volume 5, issue 1

**tools of  
the trade**

save some  
green on your  
pearly whites

**5** tooth tips if  
you have braces  
or retainers

**dental benefits  
on the go**

# grin!

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**6** feature article  
**tools of the trade:** get to know your way around the dentist’s tray

# cavity-free calendar



## March

**Happy National Nutrition Month!** Eating right benefits your overall health *and* your oral health. Getting the proper vitamins and minerals is essential for a healthy mouth!

## April

Pediatric dentists receive training on how to care for children with special needs. If you have a child with autism, **Autism Awareness Month** is a great time to start a dialogue with your pediatric dentist. Check out page 4 for more information about autism and oral health.

## May

During **Older Americans Month**, make sure your loved ones in assisted-living facilities receive proper oral health care. Ask how staff are trained to help residents with their daily and ongoing dental needs.



## two-word answers

**Q: If you floss once daily, about how much floss will you use in a lifetime?**

**A: 5 miles.**





## on topic with dr. kohn

### oral health and autism

*Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Policy, Bill Kohn, DDS. Formerly the director of the Division of Oral Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Kohn has timely tips and valuable insights to share as our resident dental expert.*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that some form of autism, a complex developmental disability, affects over 3 million Americans. People with autism often have communication difficulties and social/behavioral challenges that make it hard to seek regular dental care. Additionally, they may have motor coordination problems that make daily oral hygiene more difficult. This can lead to periodontal (gum) disease and high levels of tooth decay.

Most children with mild to moderate autism can be successfully cared for in a general dental practice setting, so parents should help children establish a good relationship with the dentist early. Finding a dentist comfortable with and experienced in treating children with developmental disorders can help with home care and successful, positive trips to the dental office. Visit [bit.ly/1Gzc7pZ](http://bit.ly/1Gzc7pZ) for more information and resources on oral health care for people with autism.

## mouth-friendly recipe: “blueberry pie” oatmeal

*Who says pie has to be bad for you? This version of the classic dessert replaces the crust with heart-healthy oatmeal and the sugary pie filling with blueberries and a bit of honey. It'll satisfy your pie craving and give you a boost of tooth-friendly vitamins C and K.*

### Ingredients:

1 cup frozen blueberries  
1 1/2 tablespoons water  
1 tablespoon honey  
1/4 teaspoon vanilla  
Pinch of salt  
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch  
1 cup dried oats, cooked

### Directions:

Combine blueberries, water, honey, vanilla and salt in a small saucepan. Sprinkle cornstarch on top and mix it in well. Bring to a boil, then let the blueberry “pie filling” simmer for 5 minutes or until thick. Pour over cooked dried oats.





## readers ask, we answer

*Sylvia asks:*

*“When it comes to avoiding stains, is tea any better for my teeth than coffee?”*

Hi, Sylvia. Both hot and iced tea and coffee are culprits of tooth staining, thanks to their dark color and acid content. But some tea can stain teeth worse than coffee because it contains higher amounts of tannins. What’s more, hot drinks tend to discolor enamel over time because the constant temperature change causes teeth to expand and contract slightly. This allows dark stains to penetrate tiny lines and micro-cracks in the enamel. Your dentist or hygienist can often remove marks like these during a professional cleaning. If you’re concerned about the color of your teeth, talk with your dentist. You may also want to consider cutting back on tea and coffee, or rinsing your mouth after you finish.



*Have a question you’d like us to answer?  
Send it to [grin@deltadental.com](mailto:grin@deltadental.com), and it  
could be featured in an upcoming issue.*

# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

*Just like an engineer or a seamstress, dentists have a host of tools that help them do their jobs. Though these instruments are designed to make dental work easier and more efficient, they can look a little intimidating to patients – especially patients who experience dental anxiety.*

*Understanding procedures can help relieve some of that apprehension – and it also helps to remember that your dentist and hygienist have gone through extensive training to know how to use these tools properly and effectively. Take some time to read about how common dental tools are used to keep your smile healthy. The next time you see them lined up on your dentist’s tray, you’ll know what to expect.*



## **SALIVA EJECTOR**

A favorite of kids everywhere, the saliva ejector is a curved tube that sucks saliva and excess liquid from the patient’s mouth.

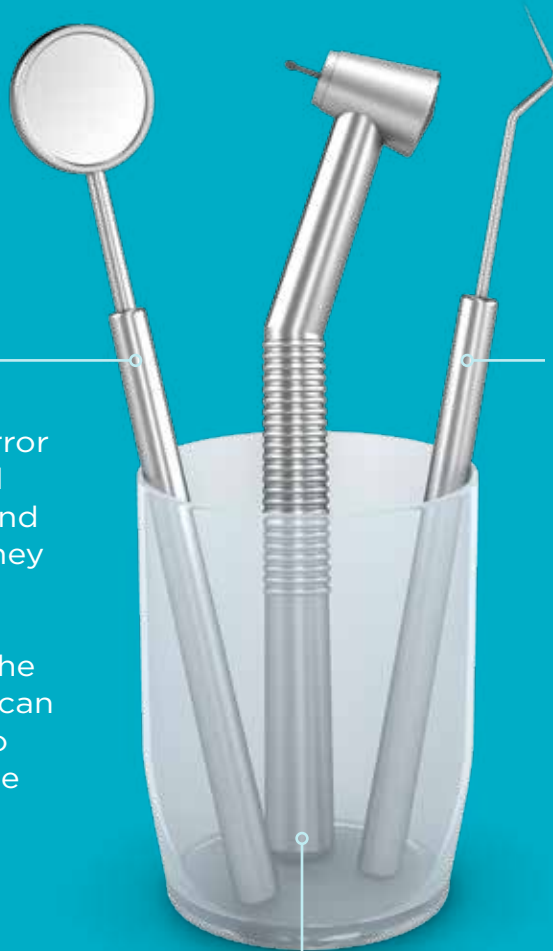


## **RETRACTORS**

Dental retractors, also known as mouth props or tooth pillows, are devices that fit inside the mouth to help keep the lips, tongue or cheeks clear of where the dentist is working. It gives the dentist easier accessibility and visibility.

## MIRROR

About the size of a quarter, a dental mirror is usually positioned on an angle at the end of a small handle. They help show dentists hard-to-see spots in the mouth such as the back of teeth. They can also reflect light into the mouth to provide better visibility.

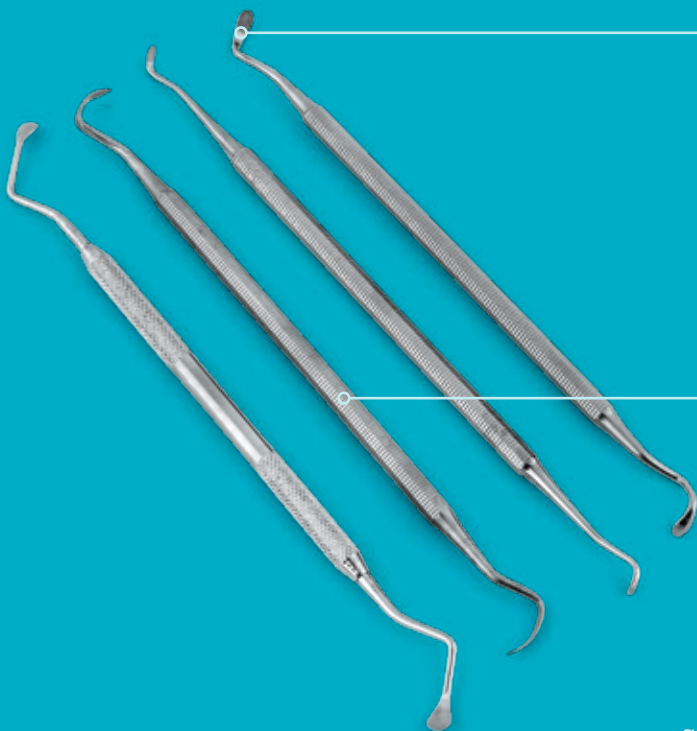


## DENTAL EXPLORER AND PERIODONTAL PROBE

These little instruments are appropriately named – they allow the dentist to explore further into mouths. They're used to check for plaque and tartar below the gum line, identify cavities, measure gum pockets and more.

## DRILL

The dental drill, which is properly called a dental hand piece, is used to remove tooth decay, get teeth ready for fillings or crowns, and smooth or polish teeth. Dental procedures that use a drill require anesthesia, so you won't feel any pain while your tooth is being prepared. This tool makes a loud noise, but there's no need to worry. If the sound really bothers you, ask your dentist if you can listen to music on headphones as a distraction.



## EXCAVATOR

Dental excavators are small tools that help your dentist remove decay to prepare teeth for fillings or other dental work. If your dentist is using these tools, your mouth has already been numbed with anesthesia – you won't feel a thing.

## DENTAL SCALER

This tool scrapes stains and tartar from the teeth and roots to help prevent gum disease.



# Save some green on your pearly whites



Everyone wants to save money while still receiving good service. With the Delta Dental PPO<sup>SM</sup> network, you'll get great dental care at lower prices. Here's how the PPO network saves you money:



**In-network dentists have agreed to pre-established fees for services.** On average, patients save 31.5 percent on the fee typically submitted for a claim. Delta Dental PPO<sup>SM</sup> dentists' rates are usually the best value, often better than other network rates.



**Delta Dental PPO network dentists won't "balance bill" patients.** That means they can't charge you the difference between their usual fee and the amount they've agreed to charge patients covered by Delta Dental.

## Delta Dental PPO Network Dentists

### Here's an example:

Let's say a procedure costs \$1,200, but Delta Dental PPO network dentists have agreed to charge a pre-established fee.



**\$850**

Your Delta Dental plan covers 50 percent of the cost.



**\$425**

Assuming you already met your deductible for the year, you pay the other half of the bill.

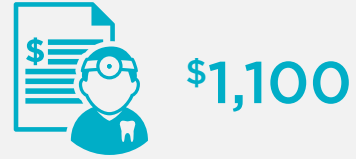


**\$425**

## Out-of-Network Dentists

### Here's an example:

If you visit an out-of-network dentist, they can bill you the full \$1,200. Delta Dental sets a limit to the amount accepted for a procedure, which is known as a maximum allowed fee.










Delta Dental covers half of the maximum allowed fee.



You pick up your half plus the \$100 that is "balance-billed" by the out-of-network dentist. Because this is an out-of-network dentist, you can be billed the difference between the maximum allowed fee and the actual cost.



## Example Savings for a Common Procedure

	 Estimated Charge	 Maximum Allowed Fees	 Percentage Paid by Delta Dental	 Amount Delta Dental Pays	 Amount Dentist can Balance Bill	 Total Amount You Pay	 Your Total Cost Savings
<b>Delta Dental PPO Network</b>	\$1,200	\$850	50%	\$425	\$0	\$425	\$350
<b>Out-of-Network</b>	\$1,200	\$1,100	50%	\$550	\$100	\$650	\$0



As you can see, it pays to use Delta Dental network dentists – especially those in Delta Dental's PPO network. Visit [deltadental.com](http://deltadental.com) today to find participating dentists in your area. **You can also download the free Delta Dental mobile app using an Apple or Android device to find dentists.**

# Why so sensitive?

*At some point, you may have experienced a little sensitivity when eating, perhaps after enjoying an ice-cold beverage or after biting into something hot. Even breathing a blast of cold air can cause discomfort. Why do some people experience sensitivity while others don't? Here are some common causes of tooth sensitivity.*



## *Exposed Dentin*

Underneath the hard, shiny enamel of each tooth is a protective layer called dentin. Dentin is extremely sensitive, and those who suffer from severe sensitivity may have inadvertently exposed the dentin layer of the tooth. An overly aggressive brushing technique can cause the gums to recede and expose the dentin on the tooth root. This can be a particularly sensitive area.



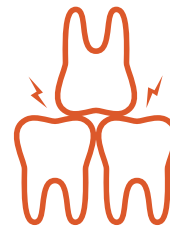
## *Whitening Treatments*

From simple whitening toothpastes and rinses to professional in-office applications, many tooth whitening treatments can cause extra sensitivity. If your quest to make your teeth pearly white is affecting their sensitivity, your dentist may recommend fewer applications or a lower-strength treatment.



## *Periodontal (Gum) Disease*

Periodontal disease can destroy the bone and gum tissue to the point that the sensitive root part of the tooth is exposed. To identify and prevent gum disease early, visit your dentist for regular cleanings and exams.



## *Tooth Grinding/Clenching*

Sensitivity can also be caused by excessive tooth grinding or clenching. Some patients are unaware they grind or clench their teeth because it only occurs in their sleep. When this is the case, wearing a mouthguard to bed to prevent the unconscious grinding can sometimes solve the problem. Your dentist will have additional suggestions and treatment options.

**Most people experience slight tooth sensitivity from time to time. If yours is frequent, interferes with your ability to eat or affects the quality of your daily life, discuss possible treatments with your dentist.**



# history of oral health: fill 'er up!

*Composite and amalgam are standard fillings these days, but centuries ago, dentists had to get a little more creative when treating a decayed tooth.*



Ancient Maya dentists used jade to create fillings that were both functional and decorative.



In 2012, scientists discovered a **beeswax filling** in a 6,500-year-old human tooth found in Slovenia. It's the oldest evidence of dental fillings on record.



Dentists in medieval England used an interesting mix of items to create fillings: **myrrh, beeswax, arsenic, sulphur and pig grease.**



CT scans of an Egyptian mummy revealed that the person likely died from a sinus infection caused by numerous cavities and abscesses. Scientists found linen packed into the mummy's largest tooth cavity and believe **it was likely soaked in medicinal fig juice or cedar oil.**



A French dentist who **mixed silver coins with mercury invented the first modern-day dental amalgam in 1826.** Today, dental amalgam is a stable alloy made by combining silver, tin, copper and other metallic elements.



# TOTALLY

# WIRED



5

## TOOTH TIPS IF YOU HAVE BRACES OR RETAINERS

*Braces or retainers can present extra challenges when it comes to cleaning your teeth. It's important to maintain a good oral health routine, even through brackets and wires.*

*These five tips will help prevent decay, staining and discoloration - resulting in a stunning post-orthodontia smile.*

**1** **Brush teeth gently after every meal.** Food particles and plaque can easily get trapped under wires and brackets, so it's important to address the issue after each meal. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. Or talk to your orthodontist about interdental or orthodontic toothbrushes, which are specially designed to clean around brackets.



**2** **Floss between braces and under wires at least once a day.** Similarly, it's easier for food and plaque to settle between teeth because it's harder to get to those crevices through the appliance. Daily flossing makes a big difference. Special orthodontic floss or a floss threader can be helpful for getting the floss into hard-to-reach places.

**3** **Schedule a dental cleaning every six months.** A professional cleaning is one of the best ways to ensure that every nook and cranny is getting the proper care.



**4** **Clean your retainer with a toothbrush.** Before you put your retainer in your mouth, clean it with a toothbrush and toothpaste. Your orthodontist may also suggest soaking your retainer in a cleaning solution. Wash your retainer before you store it, then pat it dry to prevent bacteria growth. Do not keep a damp retainer in an airtight container for long periods. And be sure to remove your retainer before eating!



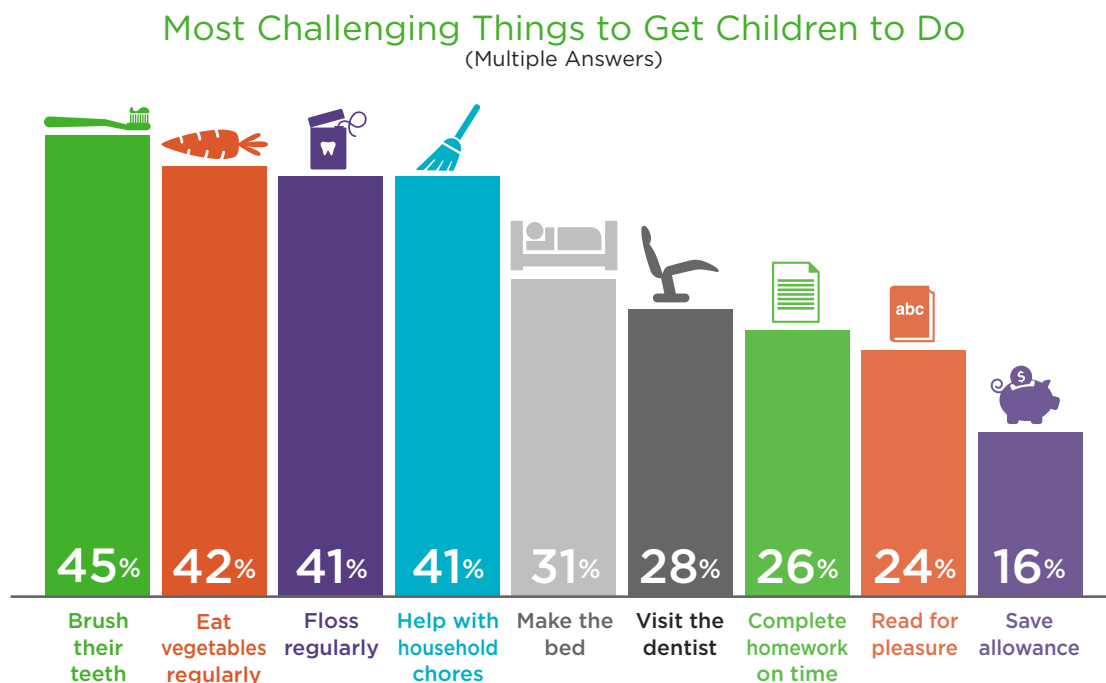
**5** **Non-traditional braces need cleaning, too.** Don't neglect removable aligners. Special cleaning kits are typically available, but brushing and rinsing your removable braces in lukewarm water also works.



# keeping you covered: 2015 children's oral health survey

As the leading brand of dental benefits in the United States, Delta Dental covers nearly 70 million smiles – including millions of our nation's youngest residents. That's why we commissioned the Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Survey, a poll that spotlights the importance of children's oral health. Together with Kelton, a leading global research firm, we surveyed 1,325 parents nationwide about their opinions and their children's oral health habits. Here are a few of the key findings from our 2015 survey:

## Parents Struggle to Keep Their Children's Oral Health on Track

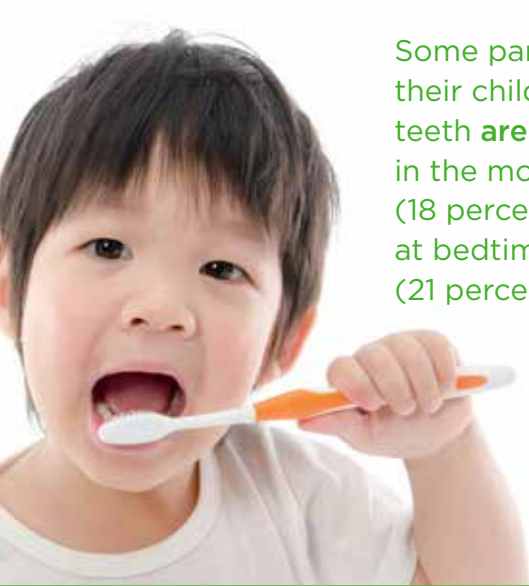


### There's Room for Additional Oral Health Education

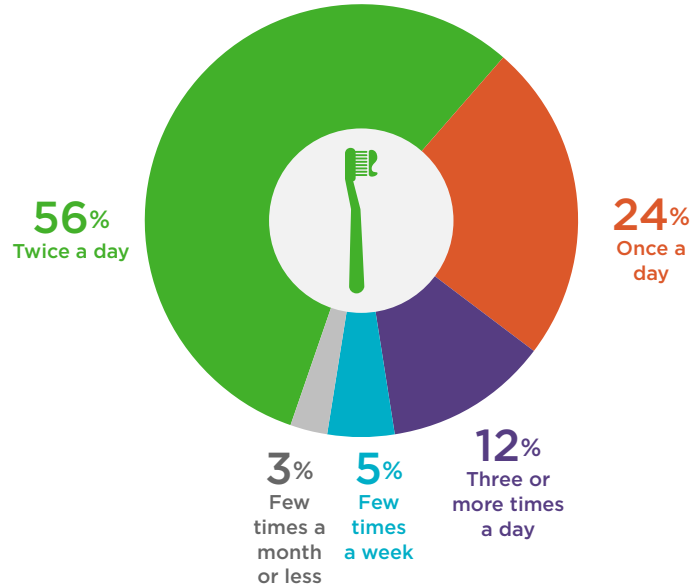
That's where Delta Dental comes in. According to survey results, parents believe that dentists are the most trusted resource on oral health – and Delta Dental is committed to providing access to more dentists than any other dental benefits carrier in the country.

# Kids' Brushing and Flossing Habits Could Be Better

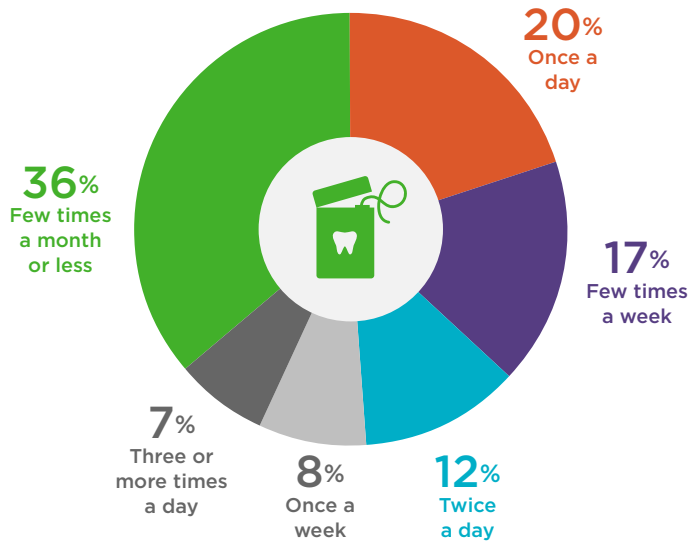
## How Often Children's Teeth Are Brushed



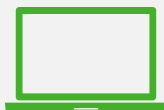
Some parents say their children's teeth **aren't** brushed in the morning (18 percent) or at bedtime (21 percent).



## How Often Children's Teeth Are Flossed



A majority (61 percent) of parents report that their children's teeth are flossed **less often** than once a day.



For more resources on children's oral health, visit [oralhealth.deltadental.com](http://oralhealth.deltadental.com).



# brushing up



*Ever wonder what your dentist is really thinking? Grin! wanted to find out too, so we talked to Delta Dental network dentist Dr. Jeffrey A. Sherman of Oakdale Family and Cosmetic Dentistry in Oakdale, New York.*

**Do you have a favorite floss flavor?**

Mint-flavored floss seems to mask the taste often associated with flossing.

**Do you prefer an electric toothbrush or a manual toothbrush?** I prefer an electric toothbrush.

**When did you decide you wanted to be a dentist?** I wanted to be a dentist because I love working with my hands and enjoy science. My personal dentist inspired me and was so excited when I selected dentistry as a career. I have been in practice since 1973. I love what I am doing and have no plans to retire from dentistry any time soon.

**If you could tell patients to stop doing one thing, what would it be?**

I tell patients to stop holding objects, like nails and sewing needles, with their teeth.

**Any funny stories from the dental chair?**

A woman was visiting from Florida and went swimming in the bay. A wave came along and dislodged her dentures, and when she surfaced, her teeth were gone! She came in and refused to leave without a set of teeth. I explained it would take several days to get them back from the lab. She looked at me sternly and said, "I am not leaving your office today without any teeth, so figure something out!" I constructed a denture with relined material and some spare denture teeth until the new ones arrived from the lab.



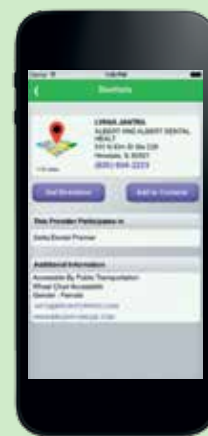
*If you'd like to recommend your dentist for a Brushing Up interview, email [grin@deltadental.com](mailto:grin@deltadental.com) with their name and contact information.*



## dental benefits on the go

Logging in to Delta Dental's free mobile app provides quick and easy access to coverage information, recent claims and even your ID card. Looking for an in-network dentist? Our app can help. You can search for a dentist by network, dental specialty, location or a provider's last name. And by clicking on a dentist's name, you can view additional information, add the dentist to your contacts, and get directions to the dental office.

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