



6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2360, West Allis, WI 53214

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FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:
Davis Renzelmann
414-755-4110 or drenzelmann@wda.org

Getting ready to drop the mask? Spruce up your smile with these tooth tips

Looking forward to being with people in person again? Ready to hit the dating scene? Excited to dine in your favorite restaurant? As COVID restrictions subside and you prepare to show your smile again, you'll want to be able to take off your mask with confidence, knowing your oral health is up to par.

"The stress brought on by the pandemic has been physically and mentally taxing, and one of the areas where that's been felt is our oral health," says WDA President Dr. Paula Crum, a periodontist in Green Bay. "Our smiles haven't been seen by others outside our homes for some time, and they've probably been neglected. No matter the circumstance, it is important to keep up good oral habits and to see your dentist regularly to address current issues and prevent new ones. As we all get ready to drop the masks and get back to seeing and doing the things we love most, you'll want to be sure your smile is ready."

The Wisconsin Dental Association recommends these useful tips for improving your smile:

- **Brush your teeth twice a day.** Brushing with a fluoride toothpaste is an essential part of your dental care routine to help remove food and plaque – the sticky white film containing bacteria that forms on your teeth. Neglecting this important duty can lead directly to tooth decay and gum disease. Brushing can also prevent bad breath – something that will be more apparent without a mask to conceal it and when social distancing becomes a thing of the past. Master a routine of brushing for two minutes once in the morning and before you go to bed. Replace your toothbrush every three to four months and be sure to use an [ADA-accepted](#) fluoride toothpaste.
- **Clean between your teeth daily.** While brushing takes care of the broader surfaces of your teeth, using an interdental cleaner like floss is required to remove excess plaque in the tight spaces your toothbrush can't reach. Many ask what the best time is to floss – and the answer is that it doesn't matter when. The important thing is that you do it. Equally as important is using the correct tools like string floss, powered water flossers or dental picks. Using irregular objects is far less effective and can leave lasting damage to your teeth and gums.
- **Drink more water.** One of the easiest and best things you can do to prevent cavities is to drink fluoridated tap water. It helps protect your tooth enamel by washing away sugar and lingering food particles stuck to your teeth. Sipping any kind of water throughout the day serves as a helpful cleaning boost between brushing. Staying hydrated also fights dry mouth when you have little to no saliva – your mouth's initial defense against decay. The benefits go beyond just your mouth. Staying hydrated helps your body maintain a normal temperature, cushions joints and prevents kidney stones – just to name a few. Add more water to your diet by replacing sugary drinks and carrying a water bottle with you that can be refilled throughout the day.
- **See your dentist regularly.** Even if you look after your teeth and gums at home, visiting a dentist will help identify and treat problems early on that you may not be aware of. Most people need to visit the dentist

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once or twice a year, but that can vary depending on specific individual needs. Your dentist will always advise on the appropriate frequency of visits, as well as the best treatment options suited to you. Be assured that it is safe to visit your dentist during the pandemic, and it has been for some time. While dental offices have always been dedicated to patient safety and infection control, they've implemented more precautions since the start of the pandemic such as added PPE and patient and staff screening to maintain those standards.

For more information about everything related to your oral health, visit the American Dental Association's public awareness website at [MouthHealthy.org](https://www.mouthhealthy.org). To find a dentist in your area, visit [WDA.org/Find-A-Dentist](https://www.wda.org/Find-A-Dentist).

About the Wisconsin Dental Association

The Wisconsin Dental Association, with 3,100 member dentists and a number of dental hygienists, is the leading voice for dentistry in Wisconsin. WDA members are committed to promoting professional excellence and quality oral health care. Established in 1870, the WDA is headquartered in West Allis and has a legislative office in Madison. The WDA is affiliated with the American Dental Association - the largest and oldest national dental association in the world. For more information, call 414-276-4520, visit [WDA.org](https://www.wda.org) and find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).