

Steer Clear of Dental Hacks

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The same, entertaining social media that can make us laugh over crazy TV show outtakes, enjoy performance snippets, and easily stay in touch with friends and family, can also expose us to alarming behavioral trends from “experts” who promote dangerous shortcuts to our health.

Here are some of the latest dental hacks, why you shouldn’t follow them, and what to do instead.

Missing Teeth

Thermoplastic beads are great for crafts. They can be molded, carved, or painted. But this material is not meant to replace teeth. Social media shows instances of individuals melting pellets and molding their own replacement teeth. This non-hygienic technique results in questionable toxicity, possible food traps, choking hazards and even gum inflammation.

If you have one or more missing teeth, see your dentist or periodontist for professional recommendations on how you can repair your smile and improve your oral health. There’s a big difference between boiling plastic in your kitchen for a craft project and attempting to repair your own teeth.

Don’t Shave or File Your Teeth

Another dental hack that’s been circulating online shows someone shaving their teeth down with a nail file to make the teeth look more proportionate. Try this hack and you could end up filing into a nerve and requiring extensive restoration. If you destroy the protective enamel covering of a tooth surface, you risk hitting a nerve and may create an environment more susceptible to tooth decay.

Those ridges on your teeth, known as mamelons, are normal. If you want to address them for cosmetic reasons, your dentist understands tooth structure and can offer cosmetic suggestions. Remember, your tooth enamel — the thin layer covering the crown of your teeth that you see — will not grow back. It’s the hardest tissue in our

bodies and protects teeth and insulates them from temperature changes. If you unintentionally (or intentionally) destroy this enamel, it's gone.

DIY Treatment for Gum Disease Does NOT Exist

Tooth loss is a big problem. The CDC shows us that about **one in six adults aged 65 or older have lost all of their teeth**, and that nearly half of all adults 30 years or older show signs of gum (periodontal) disease, the inflammatory issue that affects both the hard and soft structures that support our teeth.

Taking good care of your teeth before bacteria turns to plaque is normally achieved with daily home maintenance and regular visits to your general dentist. But once "pockets" form, only deep cleaning by a periodontal professional will help keep gum disease from escalating and those damaging pockets from getting larger.

Once you've been diagnosed with gum disease and plaque has formed under the gum line there is no way of treating that bacteria other than with regular periodontal cleaning by dental experts utilizing the right tools, like scaling and root planing procedures.

If only gum disease could be cured at home. But it can't. A lot of mouthwashes purport to kill bacteria, but the result is short lived. Once you have been diagnosed with gum disease, not even the most potent mouthwash will destroy the under-the-gum plaque that will, if unchecked, eat away at your gums and result in failing or lost teeth. Receding gums don't grow back, but your periodontist can help stop the issue from progressing or even grow them back for you.

Orthodontic Movement

You should also beware of social media fads that promote DIY orthodontics with homemade braces using rubber bands. At-home attempts at teeth straightening, bite correction or repositioning of teeth with clips and metal objects can result in accidental aspiration, toxic exposure, infection, and misalignment. Without proper dental supervision, you could cause permanent damage to your teeth.

If the time it takes to straighten your teeth is a barrier preventing you from visiting an orthodontist, ask your periodontist about ways of naturally speeding up the process. Some practices offer a minimally invasive surgical procedure that greatly accelerates orthodontic movement.

Taking an Important Step Toward Better Oral Health

Save the super glue for fixing a broken chair arm and the DIY for repairing the garden hose, not your teeth. You wouldn't attempt to "fix" a diseased heart or a broken leg yourself. So why would you want to consider playing dental expert with your teeth?

Healthy teeth are important for not only chewing and digesting food but for helping us speak clearly and maintaining structure to our faces. A beautiful smile brightens a room and gives confidence to the person exhibiting those healthy teeth. Take care of your teeth properly and you'll be glad you did.

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