



Top Five Teeth-Friendly Stocking Stuffers

As parents begin thinking about stocking stuffers, Delta Dental has suggestions for items that will make kids smile while protecting those precious pearly whites.

“Good oral health habits at home play the biggest role in preventing tooth decay over a lifetime,” said Dr. William Kohn, DDS, Delta Dental’s vice president of dental science and policy. “Parents can help kids develop good brushing habits early by making it fun.” Here are a few gift ideas for this holiday season:

- 1. Xylitol-infused Chewing Gum:** Sure, everyone loves some good peanut brittle around the holidays. But there is a sweet treat that can also improve children’s oral health. Chewing sugar-free gum after a meal stimulates saliva to buffer the acid and helps dislodge food particles from the mouth. Gum containing the natural sweetener, Xylitol, is a particularly good option since studies have shown that consistent exposure to Xylitol can help prevent tooth decay.
- 2. Flavored Toothpaste:** Children can tire of brushing with mint or bubblegum-flavored toothpastes. Fortunately, those aren’t the only toothpaste options on the market. Uniquely-flavored toothpaste varieties like chocolate, cupcake, ice cream—even pickle—can provide a change of pace and get kids excited again about the prospect of brushing their teeth. Always make sure the toothpaste contains fluoride to fight tooth decay.
- 3. Flavored Floss:** No oral hygiene routine is complete without flossing after brushing. At least toothpaste

usually tastes like mint or bubblegum. Floss is normally pretty plain, but it doesn’t have to be. Like toothpaste, there is cupcake or pickled-flavored floss to match. If those flavors don’t do the trick, there are banana and cinnamon-flavored options for kids to enjoy.

- 4. Fun Toothbrush Holder/Toothbrush:** Another way to get children brushing is by stuffing the stocking with fun oral health gifts like robot, tree or animal-shaped toothbrush holders that stick to walls. Kids like the characters and the holder provides a valuable and sanitary storage spot for their toothbrushes and toothpaste. There, the kids can place their toothbrush with a princess, race car or superhero-shaped handle. There are even “smart” toothbrushes that light up or play tunes to let kids know how long they need to brush.
- 5. Sports Mouthguard:** A recent study of America’s children’s oral health by Delta Dental found that 70 percent of kids do not wear a mouthguard during soccer, basketball or baseball/softball practices or games. Mouthguards should be worn during practices and games by kids playing contact sports to reduce the risk of injury to the mouth, teeth and gums. The quality of the mouthguard should be the primary concern, but there are plenty of fun colors and designs available to coordinate with a uniform of any color.

“Enjoy your holidays but make sure that you take good care of your teeth every day,” Dr. Kohn said.