

Travel Ideas

Safeguard Your Smile, Wherever You Go

(NAPSA)—Smile. It's vacation time—and there are so many paths to fun and adventure close to home.

Try winding your way through the Wisconsin Dells water parks or sailing Lake Superior.

If you're thirsting for Wisconsin history—and great local brews—there's Milwaukee's historic Third Ward. Relax in gracious Lake Geneva. Or gear up for great hiking and biking in scenic Door County.

So pack your bags, and don't forget your toothbrush—healthy teeth and gums don't take a vacation.

To help, here are some toothsome tips to protect your oral health en route.

Before you go

Now is a good time to think of your last regular dental checkup. If you can't recall, you might want to check in with your dentist and look for any imminent problems. If you take care of them before you go, it'll be easier to keep the fun flowing.

Have toothbrush, will travel

Whether you're road-tripping or hopping on a flight, your oral hygiene routine shouldn't take a backseat to fun. Steer clear of dental troubles with regular brushing and flossing.

Visit the travel toiletries section of a drug or discount store. You'll find plenty of essentials to keep your teeth and gums clean and healthy on the go—including travel-sized toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss.

Especially handy for long flights or camping: disposable minitoothbrush packs. They don't require water or toothpaste and fit easily into tiny purses, too.

Go ahead, vent (your toothbrush)

Moist environments breed bacteria, so keep your toothbrush as dry as possible while on the go. A vented toothbrush carrier will do the trick.

When you reach your destination, take your toothbrush out of its case so it can dry thoroughly. Keep it away from the sink and at least several feet from the toilet. (Flushing makes bacteria airborne.)

Water you waiting for?

Everyone should have a personal water bottle that's easy to hold and carry. You'll be less tempted by sodas and sugary drinks that aren't very sweet to your teeth, and more likely to drink water.



You don't have to let dental difficulties take a bite out of your vacation enjoyment.

"Drinking water, especially fluoridated water, helps reduce cavities and protects precious tooth enamel by washing away harmful acids and bacteria," explained Dr. Fred Eichmiller, Vice President and Chief Science Officer for Delta Dental of Wisconsin. "And if you add ice to cool down your drink, don't chew it. Ice cubes can crack open fillings—which can crash the best vacation plans."

Swish, rinse, repeat

If you can't brush after indulging in sticky, sweet treats (such as s'mores), just swish. Keep water nearby while you're traveling. Dr. Eichmiller encourages patients to make a habit of swishing after meals in any case to clear lingering food particles from your mouth.

Brace for emergencies

If you or anyone you're traveling with has orthodontia, it's smart to pack some dental wax. If a bracket or wire pops loose, the wax will protect your gums and mouth from injury until you can see your orthodontist.

Do you develop canker sores from spicy or salty indulgences? Then remember to pack a small tube of benzocaine (over-the-counter topical anesthetic). Applying ice or rinsing with warm salt water can also help.

Gum's the word

Sugar-free gum can be a lifesaver after meals on the go, especially if you can't brush away food particles. Gum chewing greatly increases the production of saliva, which can help reduce tooth decay. It can also satisfy your sweet tooth, so you can say no to snacks that are high in sugar.

The best vacation photos are the ones in which everybody's smiling. So keep these tooth-saving tips in mind wherever you wander—and enjoy.