

Why Lip Care is an Important Part of Your Oral Health Routine

The damaging effects of the neglect to your lips and how to best protect them

SEATTLE – Aug. 1, 2023 – Lips are one of the most sensitive organs in the body composed of more than a million nerves; yet they are often neglected and not treated properly. Without healthy, fully functioning lips, your everyday life would look very different - that is why it is so important to take the necessary steps to protect them.

Why should I protect my lips?

Lips are the body's thinnest and most fragile layer of skin, which lack sweat glands - or sebaceous oil glands – necessary to provide strong protection. This combination of thin skin and lack of natural moisturizing protection leads to dryness and susceptibility to becoming chapped, especially in drastic weather conditions. Over time, untreated chapped lips could lead to severe oral deterioration and susceptibility to wounds.

As seasons and temperatures change, your lips can be greatly impacted if not properly cared for. As we enter the hot summer months, it is important to protect your lips by using lip balm and SPF lip care. Continuous and unprotected sun exposure to the lips can cause breakage to the skin barrier and lead them to look aged and discolored, and in some cases, lead to oral cancer.

No matter the weather – or your age – it's important to pay close attention to your lips, and to develop a regular lip care routine which can help keep your lips soft, smooth and healthy.

“The lips are one of the most overlooked parts of the body, and ongoing neglect can lead to serious consequences including mouth cancer,” warns Kyle Dosch, DDS, who serves as Delta Dental of Washington's dental director. “It is important to schedule your twice annual check-ups with your dentist where they perform oral inspections to detect any urgent mouth issues.”

How can I protect my lips?

Many may think that licking your lips provides them with sufficient moisture, but in reality, this actually dries them out even more. To keep your lips hydrated use a moisturizing lip balm, which can be applied as often as you feel your lips need a hydration boost.

When looking for a good lip balm, check the ingredients for shea butter, which is a great source of moisturization. Also, when choosing a lip balm, check for SPF 30 or SPF 40. Even if it is not sunny out, there are still strong UVA and UVB rays that can lead to more damage to your lips, according to [Healthline experts](#).

Another way to protect your lips is by exfoliating at least once a week using sugar or salt mixed with your preferred nourishing oil, then follow up with a lip balm. Make sure when exfoliating, you are not applying too much pressure because you do not want to break the skin barrier any further.

Your body works in wonderful ways to communicate what it needs, so make sure to listen and look at what it is saying. By following these simple and easy steps, it will allow your lips to be full and healthy, which contributes to your overall health.

About Delta Dental of Washington

[Delta Dental of Washington](http://www.deltadentalwa.com) is the state's leading dental benefits provider, covering nearly 3 million people in Washington state and nationally. As the only not-for-profit carrier dedicated to improving oral health in Washington, Delta Dental plays a vital role extending access to care for the underserved and vulnerable populations by funding Arcora Foundation, as well as through corporate philanthropy, and oral health advocacy – to ensure all people enjoy good oral health and overall health. For more information, visit: www.deltadentalwa.com.