

TOOTH "PICKS"

Get Flossed Out When You're Stressed Out

According to *Prevention* magazine, 56 percent of people say they brush and floss less when they are stressed. But you want to take extra special care of your teeth during times of stress because stress can make you more susceptible to gum disease. Brazilian researchers found that elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol may impair the immune system, allowing bacteria to invade the gums. And having healthy teeth and gums is certainly one less thing to be stressed about!

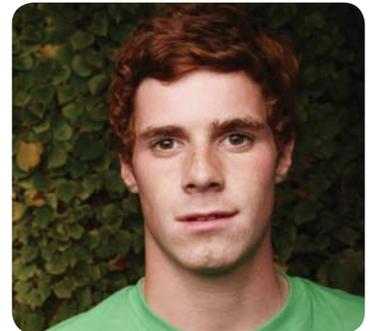
When It Comes to Tea, Cool It Now

A study published last year in the *British Medical Journal* suggests that drinking very hot tea may cause throat cancer. The researchers, who looked at the tea-drinking habits of 300 Iranians diagnosed with esophageal cancer as well as 571 healthy Iranians, theorize that drinking very hot tea (greater than 158 degrees Fahrenheit) may be associated with an increased incidence of throat cancer. They found that people who drank tea less than two minutes after pouring were five times more likely to develop throat cancer, compared to those who waited four or more minutes. Researchers are not clear how the hot tea might cause cancer, but one theory suggests that repeated thermal injury to the lining of the throat somehow initiates it. This theory definitely calls for further study, but when it comes to drinking any hot beverage—and to avoid burning your tongue—you may be better off just chilling out.



Germ-Proof Your Brush

With all the warnings about the H1N1 virus—not to mention the regular old cold and flu viruses—it's a good reminder to keep your toothbrush "healthy" too. Germs and bacteria can spread easily in a moist environment like a bathroom. So if someone in your home is sick, you may want to sterilize your toothbrush. And if you are the one recovering from a cold or flu, you should consider replacing your brush with a new one. Also, make it a habit to replace your toothbrush every three to four months, since frayed bristles are less effective at removing plaque.



Are people with red hair more sensitive when it comes to going to the dentist? According to an article in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, 46 percent of redheads avoided going to the dentist—twice the number of their dark-haired counterparts.

Seeing RED?

What's making them act so gingerly when it comes to going to the dentist? According to these researchers, redheaded and fair-skinned people have a gene mutation that affects not only hair color, but also sensitivity to anesthesia. It's believed that redheads may sense pain more easily and may require more anesthesia; in fact, a 2004 study found that redheads required 20 percent more anesthesia than their blond or dark-haired counterparts.