

TOOTH "PICKS"

Coloring Inside the (Gum) Lines

Mark Twain once said, "If you don't like the weather in New England, just wait a few minutes." Now, it seems, the same can be said of the color of your toothpaste. A retired St. Louis dentist and inventor has created the world's first color-changing toothpaste, sold under the brand name Vortex Toothpaste. When you squeeze the tube, the toothpaste comes out as one stream of red toothpaste and one stream of blue toothpaste. As you begin brushing, the colors are mixed and turn into a vivid shade of purple, a process that may appeal to children. The toothpaste, which contains cavity-fighting ingredients fluoride and xylitol, is currently only distributed in St. Louis.



So Much for Evolution

You've all heard the saying "You are what you eat," but Harvard University professor Daniel Lieberman is proposing that "your teeth are *because* of what you eat." In his book, *The Evolution of the Human Head*, the professor of human evolutionary biology at Harvard discusses how the human head has become increasingly smaller in size now versus the days of the Cro-Magnon man, and that this may be attributed to a modern diet of overly processed and soft food. According to Dr. Lieberman, as bones grow, their size and shape respond to biomechanical stresses, such as chewing, so he studied the effects of chewing hard versus soft food on the growth and development of the skull in various animal species. In one study, he fed soft food to one group of pigs and hard food to another, and found that the upper and lower jaws of the pigs eating hard food grew larger due to the stresses of chewing. "I think many people today never have to actually chew anything all day long," he says in an article in *Harvard Magazine*. "You can see the effects of that shift in our heads now in terms of molar impactions," meaning that small faces and jaws leave little room for teeth. Does this mean that prehistoric man didn't need to have wisdom teeth extractions?



Can't Buy Me Love, But Can Buy Me a Beatle's Tooth

The Tooth Fairy is no doubt breathing a sigh of relief that her rates aren't this high: In early November, Canadian dentist Michael Zuk paid nearly \$31,000 for a decayed molar allegedly pulled from the mouth of former Beatle John Lennon at an auction in the United Kingdom, according to *Rolling Stone*. Apparently, the now-deceased Lennon gave the tooth to his housekeeper sometime between 1964 and 1968 to give to her daughter, who was a big fan of the Fab Four. Through the years, the woman's family held on to the tooth but felt that now was a good time to pass it on to a new fan. The tooth, which was described by the auction house as "rather gruesome, yellowy, brownish with a cavity," is too fragile for a DNA test to confirm that it truly was Lennon's, but the owner of the auction house was confident of the tooth's authenticity. Dr. Zuk, who has written a book on celebrities' teeth, claims he will display Lennon's tooth at his dental practice.



"Yaeba" Dabba Don't?

In America, crooked teeth or teeth with wide spaces are sometimes a source of embarrassment and self-consciousness for the individual. That's not the case in Japan, where a dental fashion fad that has women paying to have their naturally straight teeth misaligned has grown in prominence in recent years, according to *The New York Times*. Known as the "yaeba" look, this trend is defined by a crowded, crooked-tooth smile with accentuated canine teeth, and some Japanese women have even gone so far as to have their dentists affix plastic fronts, or nonpermanent adhesive mini-fangs. Yaeba, which means "double tooth" in Japanese, has become popular because some Japanese women believe that an imperfect smile makes them more attractive. However, some speculate that the basis for the "snaggletooth" trend is similar to that for many other trends: the desire to appear younger. Dr. Emilie Zaslow, an assistant professor of communication studies at Pace University in Manhattan, attributes the trend to a "fixation with youth," since naturally occurring yaeba are the result of delayed baby teeth or a mouth that's too small. It would seem that American women are not that different from their Far East counterparts. The gap-toothed smile, made popular by model/actress Lauren Hutton in the 1970s, has recently staged a comeback in the American fashion world, with several fashion models sporting the look. When it comes to beauty and fashion, trends come and go. But when it comes to healthy, straight teeth, why mess with perfection?