How is your health? Look inside your mouth

According to the Academy of General Dentistry, new research shows that the health of your mouth mirrors the condition of your body as a whole. The mouth is a major portal of entry to the body and is filled with 10 to 50 billion types of bacteria. Without proper oral hygiene, bacteria can reach levels that may lead to oral infections.

About 75 percent of Americans are affected by gingivitis or advanced gum disease caused by oral infections to the gums. This can be problematic as your mouth is where digestion starts and infections in the mouth can lead to intestinal failure, irritable bowel syndrome and other digestive disorders. Studies also show that more than 90 percent of all systemic diseases such as diabetes, pancreatic cancer, oral cancer, heart disease and kidney disease have oral manifestations.

The American Dental Association provides these recommendations to help reduce your risk of oral complications:

- **Brush twice a day** for at least two minutes, using fluoridated toothpaste.
- **Floss daily** to remove plaque from places your toothbrush can’t reach.
- **Eat a healthy diet** to provide the nutrients necessary (vitamins A and C, in particular) to prevent gum disease.
- **Avoid cigarettes and smokeless tobacco**, which are known to contribute to gum disease and oral cancer.
- **Visit the dentist regularly** for cleanings and exams. This is one of the most effective ways to detect the early signs of gum disease.
Give it a try

BULLET JOURNALING

Track the past, organize the present and plan for the future. For a quick video tutorial of how to set up a bullet journal, visit bulletjournal.com

1. Create your journal with an index, six month future log, monthly log and daily log. You can take notes in your journal for any long standing projects, just make sure to label the top of the page and put it in your index.

2. Organize the things you need to do by writing down your tasks, events and notes in the daily log. When something is completed, “X” out the symbol that precedes the item.

3. Review any unfinished tasks at the end of each month. Ask yourself, “Is this still worth my time?” If the task is not, strike it out, but if it is something that you still want to do, transfer to the next month. If it is due more than a month from now, record it in the six month future log. This will help you remove distractions.

Effective email communication

When communicating in the workplace, how do you reach people? Chances are good that it’s email. In 2015, the average user sent and received 122 business emails per day, and that number is expected to grow. In the midst of constant communication, how can you increase the chances that your emails are opened, read and responded to?

Before you start drafting your message, make sure that email is the most appropriate format for the conversation. Email is beneficial in situations when you don't need an immediate response, have a fairly simple message or question or you would like to reference your previous email conversation. If the conversation requires back and forth discussion, an immediate response, buy-in or is about a sensitive topic that may cause tension, consider making a phone call or scheduling an in-person meeting instead.

Once you decide that email is the correct format, it’s time to write an effective message. Don’t forget to include your subject line in this process! Subject lines should be concise and clear. Carnegie Mellon researchers found that the most effective subject lines appeal to utility or curiosity.

If you are familiar with the email recipient, state the action item at the beginning of the email so the request appears in the message preview or pop-up alert. This will help you get a quick answer. If this is an introductory email, begin by reminding the reader how you met or provide context for your email.

Now you can move to the body of the email. If you haven’t already, this is where to explain your action item and provide information about it. Again, keep it concise! You don’t want the reader to comb through long paragraphs to get to your point. They may not take the time. Try using statements rather than open-ended questions.

Author Tim Ferris recommends concluding your email by using if-then statements to decrease the back and forth of future emails. For example, “I can meet at 8, 3 or 4. Will one of these times work? If not, please provide three times that do.”

And finally, always review your email before sending. Make sure your tone is professional and kind. If it’s not, ask yourself if an angry email has ever had a positive effect, delete it and schedule an in-person meeting instead.

By being intentional about how you communicate, you will be more effective in your work.

Sweet potato nachos

Serves: 6 | Total time: 60 min | Prep: 20 min | Cook: 40 min

Ingredients:
- 1 large sweet potato
- 2 Tbsp olive or canola oil
- Healthy nacho toppers:
  - 1 cup diced onion
  - 1 cup diced tomato
  - 1 cup diced green pepper
  - Salsa
  - 1 cup of fat-free or vegetarian refried beans
  - 1 whole diced avocado

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Keep the skin on the sweet potato and slice into 1/8 of an inch or less pieces. Toss slices of sweet potato in oil and coat evenly. Place parchment, baking paper or cooling rack onto a flat roasting pan. Place potatoes in a single layer. Bake for 20 minutes on one side, flip and bake for an additional 15 minutes. You want your pieces to be crispy and hold their shape. Pieces should be slightly brown on the outside. Larger or thicker pieces may need longer to cook than smaller pieces. Once crisp, cover sweet potato pieces with shredded cheese and bake for 3-5 minutes or until cheese is melted.

While sweet potatoes are in the oven, prepare your desired nacho toppings. Place sweet potato slices on a serving plate and layer with nacho toppings.

Nutrition Facts for bites with black beans, onion, tomato, green pepper, salsa and avocado:
- Calories: 204
- Total Fat: 10 g
- Sodium: 175 mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 22 g
- Dietary Fiber: 7 g
- Total Protein: 7 g

Nutrition information computed using nutritiondata.com