

Benefits Spotlight

News for *You*. News to *Share* with your Employees.

5 Dental Health Innovations Worth Checking Out

Like any scientific field, dentistry is constantly evolving to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. These needs are not only about improving health care outcomes but also about making the patient experience better.

Has it been awhile since you've seen the dentist? Perhaps you have a fear of the dentist's office, or maybe you've felt uneasy visiting your dentist due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whatever the reason, you may be surprised that dental innovations are making it easier and more comfortable than ever to receive dental care. Here, learn about five innovations that may just inspire you to make your next appointment.

- 1. Virtual Reality:** If sitting in a dentist's office fills you with anxiety, you're not alone. Studies estimate that 36% of the population suffers from dental anxiety¹. One way dentists are easing patient anxiety is through virtual reality. Some offices offer virtual reality headsets, which transport you to a calming place like a relaxing island beach or peaceful mountain resort — complete with all the sights and sounds. The technique distracts you during your appointment, leaving you feeling refreshed after the visit.
- 2. Intra-Oral Camera:** Another dental innovation aimed at making patients more comfortable in the dental chair is the intra-oral camera. This device allows the dentist to better see inside your mouth without you having to open your mouth painfully wide for an extended period of time. An intra-oral camera uses a small dental mirror with a camera on it, and the dentist can view the images on the camera outside of your mouth. These images also provide a clearer way for a dentist to show you what he or she sees in your mouth, which can help you better visualize and connect to your own oral health.
- 3. 3D Printing:** 3D printing enables cost-effective and quick production of dental crowns, aligners, retainers and other dental equipment. Where previously these devices needed to be made in an outside dental lab, now many dental offices are able to produce them by taking a picture of your tooth and printing the device using a 3D printer right in the office.

4. Teledentistry: COVID-19 affected all lowans' lives. Early on in the pandemic, dental offices could only perform emergency dental procedures — all preventive visits and cleanings had to be rescheduled. And although appointments are being scheduled as normal, going to a clinic for a check-up is a nerve-wracking experience for some. Fortunately, teledentistry is an option for people who still want to speak with a dentist but aren't able or ready to go into an office. Although not in the same room, dentists can still use teledentistry to take images of your mouth, offer advice and provide guidance on whether you may need an in-person visit. **If you'd like to learn more about teledentistry, please call Delta Dental of Iowa's Customer Service team using the number on the back of you ID card.**

5. Smart toothbrushes: Dental innovations don't only exist at your dentist's office — you can experience the future of dentistry at home with a smart toothbrush. Smart toothbrushes are designed with sensors that detect if you're brushing the right way, providing real-time feedback that lets you know if you're brushing too hard, missing spots in your mouth or not brushing long enough. Most smart toothbrushes also have corresponding apps so you can track trends. But it's important to remember: **A smart toothbrush is not a substitute for a dentist.**

Your twice-yearly dental visits are the best way to keep your mouth clean and healthy, and your dentist uses these appointments to screen for oral cancer and identify signs of decay or disease at its earliest development.

Your Dentist Will See You Now — And Delta Dental of Iowa Can Help!

If you need to find an in-network dentist, Delta Dental of Iowa's Find a Provider tool can show a list of dentists near you. Or, you can give our Customer Service team a call (the number is on the back of your Delta Dental of Iowa ID card), and we'll help you a select a dentist who is conveniently located.

Once you choose your dentist, give them a call to learn if the office offers these or other innovations to help make your appointment an enjoyable and comfortable experience.

Reference

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5586885/#:~:text=Dental%20anxiety%2C%20or%20dental%20fear,extreme%20dental%20fear%20%5B1%5D>

SOURCES:

1. https://www.adea.org/GoDental/Dental_Blogs/Words_From_Your_Peers/The_Future_of_Dental_Technology_and_Innovation.aspx
2. <https://medicalfuturist.com/the-amazing-future-of-dentistry-and-oral-health/>

Meatless and Mouth-friendly: Sweet Potato Burgers

Is your New Year's Resolution still firmly front of mind? If your 2021 goals include some form of eating healthier, then this sweet potato burger recipe will help keep you on track.

But if veggie burgers inspire thoughts of highly processed, flavorless and dry patties, this recipe might change your mind. This version is savory and spicy, and the fiber-rich sweet potato lends a great texture.

In addition to including a heaping helping of veggies, this dish features the antioxidant-dense spice turmeric, which boasts anti-inflammatory properties. The white beans are also rich in calcium, which is one of the best nutrients to help keep your teeth healthy and strong.

So, fire up the grill (or skillet) and feel good about caving in to your burger craving.

Ingredients:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup mashed, boiled sweet potato (or about $\frac{1}{2}$ medium peeled and cooked sweet potato)
- 15 ounces canned white beans, rinsed and drained
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 tablespoons dried cilantro
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- Ground black pepper, to taste
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 4 whole-wheat hamburger buns or lettuce wraps
- Toppings of your choice (our favorites are sliced avocado, a small handful of spinach and thinly sliced red onion)

Directions:

1. Place mashed sweet potato and white beans into a food processor. Blend until well combined, then transfer mixture to a large bowl.
2. Add whole-wheat breadcrumbs, ginger, garlic powder, cilantro, turmeric, cayenne and salt. Generously season with pepper. Mix ingredients together well. Adjust seasonings and add pepper to taste.
3. Use your hands to form four, tightly packed patties about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick. Place on a plate, cover with plastic wrap and put in the fridge for 10 to 15 minutes to firm up.
4. Spray skillet with nonstick cooking spray and place over medium heat. When the skillet is hot, add each burger and cook about 2 to 4 minutes on each side until golden brown.
5. Remove from heat, and add to buns or lettuce wraps. Add your favorite toppings. Enjoy!