

Where Laughter Meets Dentistry

CREATIVE WINTER EVENTS FOR HAPPIER, HEALTHIER SMILES!

Going to the dentist doesn't have to be scary; it can actually be fun! When kids walk into your pediatric dental office, they should feel like they've stepped into a place full of smiles, laughter, and excitement (with maybe a little sparkle of magic, too). The more fun your office feels, the more comfortable and confident your young patients will be, and that's the secret to building lifelong healthy dental habits.

So, how do you make your office the kind of place kids want to visit? Sprinkle in creativity, community, and a whole lot of joy! Hosting fun, themed events tied to quirky holidays and the changing seasons is a fantastic way to keep your patients engaged both in the office and online.

Here are a few bright, smile-worthy ideas that will make your pediatric dental office the talk of the town this winter.

Jan. 24, Global Belly Laugh Day

This day is all about giggles and grins, and that fits perfectly with your mission! Decorate your waiting room with cheerful posters of dental jokes ("What does a tooth say to the dentist? Fill me in!"), and post one-liners on your social media throughout the day. Encourage families to share their favorite kid-friendly jokes in the comments, and feature your favorites in your stories. Laughter really is the best medicine, and on this day, it's also the best marketing tool.



Jan. 25, Opposite Day

Who doesn't love a good laugh at mismatched shoes and backward shirts? For Opposite Day, invite your patients to come to their appointments dressed in the silliest "opposite" outfits they can imagine, with shirts inside out, pants backward, or maybe even mom and dad switching styles for the day! Take photos (with permission, of course) and post them on your social media pages. You can even host an online "Best Opposite Outfit" contest, where patients post their photos, tag your office, and enter to win a fun prize.

February, Love Your Smile Month

Valentine's Day isn't just a ton of candy; it's for celebrating those beautiful smiles, too! Create a "Love Your Smile" photo booth in your office, complete with heart props, toothy cutouts, and Valentine-themed backdrops. Families can snap photos before or after their appointments and share them on social media using a special hashtag.

Winter-Themed Fun

When the weather gets chilly, keep your office warm and cheerful! Set up a "Make Your Own Snowflake" craft station in the waiting room. Kids can cut, color, and decorate their creations while waiting for their appointment. Hang their snowflakes with floss around the office to turn your space into a winter wonderland.

Add more fun online with a "Create Your Own Sweetie's Saying" contest: invite patients to come up with their own sweet or funny dental slogans, and let your followers vote for their favorite. And of course, don't forget the crowd favorite: the Candy Jar Guessing Game! Post a photo of your candy jar filled with candy hearts with the messages on them on social media and have both in-office and online followers guess how many pieces are inside.

These playful, themed activities all help build lasting connections with your patients and their families. When your office becomes a place where kids laugh, create, and celebrate, you're growing a community full of happy, loyal patients who can't wait to come back!

Rhea

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ONE JAR, COUNTLESS SMILES

KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH GRATITUDE

The start of a new year always feels like a blank page full of possibilities. While many families dive into resolutions and goal-setting, try another tradition just as powerful (and a lot more fun): creating a family gratitude jar.

Instead of focusing on what to change, this little project helps you notice and celebrate what's already good in your life. With nothing more than a jar, scraps of paper, and a few minutes daily, you can build a collection of joyful moments your family will treasure all year.

Getting Started

Pick a container. It doesn't have to be fancy. A mason jar, decorated tin, or clear plastic container all work as long as they can sit where you'll see them daily.

Prepare the supplies. Cut paper into squares (3-by-3 inches works nicely) and have pens, crayons, or markers nearby. If someone doesn't love writing, they can draw, circle options, or dictate for an adult to write. Have extras ready so you're never scrambling.

Set a daily ritual. Decide together when you'll pause to think and share. It could be after dinner, tucked into bedtime routines, or first thing in the morning. What matters is consistency. Stick with it long enough that it becomes part of your rhythm.

Use a simple prompt. Here's an easy method: Ask each person, "What was a bright moment today?" Encourage them to name something specific, even if it's small, like "the puppy barking" or "a funny joke." Give them space. Then have them write or draw it, slip it into the jar, and (if you like) share aloud.

Make it meaningful later. Open the jar together once a month or at the end of the year and read through the notes. You'll be surprised how small moments you may have forgotten feel powerful all over again. Use them to spark intention for the coming year: "I want more of that," or "Let's do more kind acts like this."

Starting a gratitude jar is about building a modest, consistent habit that opens your eyes to abundance. Over time, the jar becomes a treasure chest of your family's stories, reminders, and unseen miracles. That collective memory anchors your family in kindness, wonder, and connection as each new year unfolds!



SITUATION OF THE MONTH

Dear PDTA Pro,

With the new year having just kicked off and the holiday season coming to a close, things can feel a little uneventful this time of year. What are some ways we can keep things fun and engaging for our staff and patients around the office?

—Looking For Some Fun

Dear Looking For Some Fun,

Keeping your staff engaged and your pediatric dental patients excited to visit your office can turn every appointment into a moment of joy and keep your team motivated, too! Creating a fun, uplifting environment not only helps kids feel comfortable but also strengthens your office culture. Here are a few ideas to keep the smiles coming all year round.

Start the year off with laughter by celebrating National Hat Day on Jan. 15! Encourage your entire team to show off their most creative or silly hats. This can be crowns, cowboy hats, superhero helmets, or even themed tooth-shaped caps. Kids will love picking their favorite staff hat of the day, and you could even snap a few photos (with parent permission) for your social media page. Be sure to post a group photo with all the hats. You could also run a contest for your patients to do the same, pick the best one for a prize, or have them post to your practice's Facebook page, and whoever gets the most likes wins a prize or both!

Then, in February, you can embrace generosity during Give Kids a Smile Day on Feb. 7. Your office can choose one or two families to receive complimentary dental care or a special dental goodie basket. Check with local churches or schools for names of families in need of help. Many times, a school nurse knows who has dental issues and

is in pain. If you want to spread the kindness even further, consider turning it into a team challenge and participating in a fun run, or organizing a mini "Smile Race" to raise funds for a children's charity. This type of outreach strengthens bonds within your team and demonstrates to your patients that your practice genuinely cares about the community.

Speaking of giving back, look for ways to keep that spirit alive year-round. Check your local Chamber of Commerce listings for volunteer opportunities like hosting a booth at a health fair, supporting a kids sports event, or joining a local food drive. Getting involved together builds pride, teamwork, and purpose. When your staff feels appreciated and kids associate your office with fun, laughter, and kindness, everyone leaves smiling a little brighter.

We hope this is helpful!

—Pediatric Pro

3 DAILY HABITS THAT WILL TRANSFORM YOUR 2026

As we enter another new year, there's no better time to adjust your daily habits to help you become the healthiest version of yourself mentally and physically. Here are three strategies you can incorporate into your New Year's expectations and resolutions that will help ensure 2026 is your healthiest year yet!

Start every day strong.

Many Americans fall into the same routines year after year, and most are dangerous for their overall well-being. They stay up too late, wake up to an alarm a few hours later, scramble to get ready, and jump in the car as soon as possible to get to work. Your morning routine sets the tone for your day. If you're in a hurry every morning, you will feel rushed and exhausted. Give yourself ample time in the morning to take care of yourself and some simple chores. Make your bed, have a glass of water, take good care of your hygiene, eat something, and incorporate some movement into your mornings. It will be hard initially, but you'll feel the benefits within a few weeks.

Diet and exercise matter.

This is probably not news to you, but we can't downplay the importance of diet and exercise. Listen to your body; it will tell you what it needs. Many people fall



into the trap of overeating without realizing it or starving themselves when they want to lose weight, but this won't make them feel good. Eat when your body tells you to, stick to a healthy diet, and find time for exercise. You need to find ways to motivate yourself, especially when you want to stay in bed and stick to comfort foods. Your body will thank you.

Drink more water.

How much water do you drink each day? The U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that men should drink about 15.5 cups of fluids daily and women should drink 11.5 cups. If you aren't hitting these numbers, it's time to adjust. Start and finish each day with a glass of water. Walk around with a refillable bottle. Staying hydrated will help your body function much better.

HAVE A LAUGH

I hope my neighbor's New Year's resolution is to throw out the pumpkins on their porch.



So ... now can I play with the giant stick?



Slow Cooker Birria Tacos

INGREDIENTS

Inspired by SimpleWhisk.com

- 3 dried guajillo chiles
- 2 dried ancho chiles
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 (14.5-oz) can diced tomatoes
- 3 lbs beef chuck roast
- 2 cups beef broth
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp salt
- Pepper, to taste
- Corn tortillas
- Fresh cilantro and diced onion for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Soak dried chiles in hot water for 15 minutes.
2. Process chiles, onion, garlic, and tomatoes in a blender until smooth.
3. Place beef in a slow cooker and pour the chili mixture over it.
4. Add beef broth, vinegar, oregano, cumin, bay leaves, salt, and pepper.
5. Cook on low for 8–10 hours or until the beef is tender.
6. Shred the beef using forks, then mix back into the sauce.
7. Fry tortillas in oil until crispy, then assemble tacos as desired.

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DON'T LET THE FIRE DIE

MAKE WINTER BONFIRES YOUR NEW TRADITION

Many Americans invite their friends and family for a bonfire throughout the summer and fall. Nothing beats making s'mores, sharing stories, and enjoying the flickering flame under the moonlight. As temperatures drop and winter weather appears on the radar, some cover and ignore their bonfire area until after the cold and rainy seasons. However, you can still create an awe-inspiring bonfire during winter if you put together a plan.

Winter bonfires can quickly become a regular part of your seasonal traditions, and these strategies will help ensure your bonfire is a hit with everyone who attends.

Help people stay warm.

Nobody wants to sit outside in the dark and freezing cold. Encourage everyone attending to dress in warm clothes appropriate for the frigid temperatures, but be prepared to help out if someone starts to feel

chilly. Have extra blankets and coats within reach so you can easily pass them to anyone in need.

Provide toasty treats.

Sometimes, clothes alone are not enough to protect us from winter's chill. During these moments, it can help to eat or drink something that fills your whole body with warmth. Thankfully, you'll have a bonfire to help you toast and warm some delicious treats. S'mores are usually the go-to, but you can also warm up hot dogs, sausages, or even corn on the cob. And don't forget the drinks! Hot chocolate, warm apple cider, or even tea can help everyone stay comfortable and in good spirits.

Add games or fun activities.

Some may grow bored with traditional bonfire activities, which is why you should have an extra activity or game up your sleeve. Depending on



the lighting, you could play a card or board game. If the lighting is too dim, you can incorporate other activities requiring more movement and adventure. Kids and adults alike will have fun playing a game of flashlight tag or participating in a scavenger hunt. Plus, the extra movement will help everyone stay warm!