



Say “Ah”

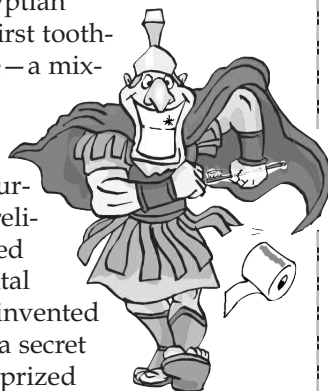
A CLOSER LOOK AT DENTAL HISTORY

It's hard to believe, but most Americans didn't brush their teeth until soldiers brought the Army-enforced habit back home from World War II.

ALTHOUGH IT TOOK AMERICANS a while to catch on to good oral hygiene practices, people throughout history have worked to care for their teeth, starting as far back as the ancient Egyptians. “Chew sticks” — twigs with one end frayed into soft bristles — have been found in Egyptian tombs going back to about 3000 B.C. The first toothpaste was developed about the same time — a mixture of ground pumice and wine.

POTTY MOUTHS

The ancient Romans took teeth cleaning further, including it as part of some of their religious ceremonies. The patriarchy employed certain slaves, forerunners of modern dental hygienists, to clean their teeth. They also invented the first toothpaste and mouthwash with a secret ingredient: human urine. They especially prized



imported Portuguese urine for its strength, but that was probably more a function of evaporation on the long trip to Rome than any ethnic characteristics.

Urine continued to be an active ingredient in toothpastes and mouthwashes until well into the 18th century, because its ammonia was a great cleanser. In fact, ammonia continues to be an

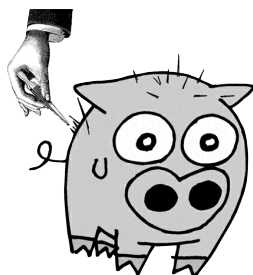
ingredient in many modern dentifrices, but now it's manufactured in the laboratory, not the lavatory. Other ingredients in toothpaste over the years included herbs,

honey, ground shells, talc, mice, rabbit heads and lizard livers.

BRISTLING AT THE THOUGHT

The first toothbrush appeared in China around 1498. The bristles were plucked from hogs living in China's cold-weather provinces because their hair was stouter and firmer; the hairs were set into

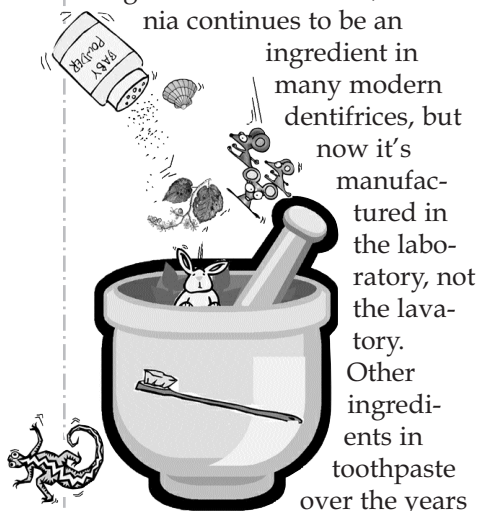
handles of bone or bamboo. The Chinese toothbrush traveled to Europe in the 1600s and became widely used.



The toothbrush stayed pretty much the same for several hundred years. Finally, the discovery of nylon in 1938 revolutionized the toothbrush, and just in time for World War II. The bristles of Dr. West's Miracle Tuft Toothbrush released that year were stiff enough to be a painful hazard to the gums; it wasn't until the early 1950s that a safe, soft nylon bristle became the standard. Since then, more than 2,000 toothbrushes have been patented across the world.

IT'S ELEMENTAL!

Dentists discovered the positive effects of fluoride on teeth in 1802 when they noticed that the citizens of fluoride-rich Naples, Italy, had brown mottled teeth but few cavities. By the 1840s, some Europeans sucked



honey-flavored fluoride lozenges to prevent tooth decay, but the idea of adding the chemical to toothpaste was still a century away. Instead, manufacturers started adding soap in 1824 and chalk in the 1850s. In 1892, Dr. Washington Sheffield of Connecticut was the first to put toothpaste into tubes like those used for oil paint.

In 1945, Grand Rapids, Michigan, became the first U.S. city to deliberately add fluoride to city water to reduce cavities. Other cities followed suit to a point that nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population now has fluoridated water, despite warnings from right-wing fearmongers that fluoride was a communist plot to produce a generation of drugged and mind-controlled zombies. (Hmm, look around you—maybe they were right after all?)

Procter & Gamble was the first company to package fluoride into a toothpaste in 1956. In a brilliant ad campaign that's still quoted 40 years later, kids ran into the house brandishing notes from their dentist and screaming, "Look ma, no cavities!"

GOOD VIBRATIONS

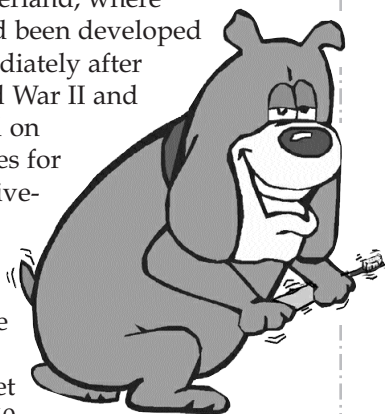
Meanwhile, electric toothbrushes made their way from

Switzerland, where they'd been developed immediately after World War II and tested on canines for effectiveness. They first hit the U.S. market in 1960.

The latest gimmick is an ultrasonic toothbrush that is reported to clean between teeth with high-pitched sound waves. Maybe true, but don't throw away the floss until all the results are in.

DRILLING FOR FACTS

- It's hard to imagine, but Colgate claims "Tooth Fairy" as a registered trademark. Hopefully, corporate sponsorship means the TF can leave a lot more money under the pillow. Your can fill out a form and get an e-mail from the Tooth Fairy® Itself.
- Colgate reportedly faced a big obstacle marketing toothpaste in Spanish speaking countries. Colgate translates into the command "Go hang yourself."
- Although Crest with fluoride came out in 1955, it just



sat on store shelves, to Procter & Gamble's bewilderment. P&G touted a high-profile study proving that fluoride prevents cavities and lobbied the American Dental Association for an endorsement. Both—touted in “Look ma, our group had 23% fewer cavities!” ads—finally brought Crest skyrocketing sales in the early 1960s.

- In 1959, dentists performed 34 extractions for every 100 people. Getting dentures was considered a natural step in the aging process. Today, it's half that rate.

- Saliva is a natural bacteria destroyer, and antidepressants, antihypertensives, antihistamines, decongestants and muscle relaxants can all inhibit saliva production.

- The old Listerine commercial notwithstanding, not even mouthwash really helps bad breath beyond a minute or two—in fact, alcohol and hydrogen peroxide can actually worsen the conditions. Baking soda makes your mouth more

alkaline—exactly the wrong direction, because acidity decreases bad breath.

- We worry about bad breath to the tune of \$10 billion a year of profit to mint, gum, and mouthwash manufacturers, nearly all of it wasted.

- Regular flossing and proper brushing is the best cure for halitosis, or bad breath.

- How about a tooth tattoo?

Tiny gold images of hearts, butterflies and rabbits have become popular among certain trendy subgroups. The downside is that from a distance of more than about 3 feet it just looks like you have food stuck in your teeth.



- In case you've tried brushing, flossing and regular check-ups and still have problem teeth, try religion. The patron saint of dentists is St. Apollonia, who reportedly had her teeth pulled out in A.D. 249 by an anti-Christian mob. ☹



No nitrous oxide for poor St. Apollonia



Month to Month

THE ROMAN ARTIFACT THAT RUNS OUR LIVES

Ever wonder where we got the names of our months? Blame the Romans. Legend has it that about 2,700 years ago, Numa Pompilius, the second emperor of Rome, invented the first Roman calendar. We're still stuck with it.

MARCH (MARTIUS)

"It's March 1 — *Happy New Year!*" For centuries, Martius was the first month of the year, honoring the Roman god Mars.

Although best known as the god of war, Mars was also the lord of agriculture and the mythical founder of Rome (thus making him first in war, first in peas, and first in the start of his countrymen).

APRIL (APRILIS)

The month of April takes its name from the Latin word *aperere*, meaning "opening," as the buds and leaves are all doing about that time of year.

The Greeks associated the goddess Aphrodite with this month; she represented beauty, love, and fertility. In ancient Rome, Miss April was Venus, the goddess of vegetation and defender of feminine chastity.



Mars needs women, but women need Juno.

MAY (MAIUS)

The Roman poet Ovid wrote that the name of this month came from *maiores*, the Latin word for “elderly.” However, more credible sources credit Maia, the Greek goddess of fertility and mother of the god Mercury. Ritual sacrifices were made to Mercury on the first day of Maia’s month. The Romans passed the day on to the Anglo-Saxons, who exchanged messy sacrifices for more festive things like May Day feasts, May queens, and May poles.

JUNE (JUNIUS)

Juno was Jupiter’s sister, and the head Roman goddess. She was the goddess of marriage and happy females, and watched over women during events like marriage and childbirth. As a result, June weddings became a common custom. (However, poet Ovid swore that June actually came from the Latin word *juniores*, loosely meaning “young folk.” But who you gonna believe—tradition or some unreliable poet?)

JULY (JULIUS)

Originally July was called *Quintilis Mensis* (“the fifth month” in Latin). That was until Julius Caesar came

along and did a lot of fidgeting with the calendar. In honor of all his hard work on what became known as the Julian calendar, he named this month after himself.

AUGUST (AUGUSTUS)

Caesar Augustus decided to follow Julius’s example and renamed *Sextilis Mensis* (“month number six”) after himself. Augustus had tweaked Julius’s calendar a little, so thought he deserved his own month, too.

SEPTEMBER (SEPTEMBER MENSIS)

Although it’s now the ninth month, September comes from the Latin *septem* meaning “seven.” (It got its name before January and February got moved to the beginning of the calendar.) According to record, several Roman emperors attempted to insert their names into the calendar on this month, but none of them really took, so it remains “September.”

OCTOBER (OCTOBER MENSIS)

October, originally the eighth month in the calendar, comes from *octo*, Latin for “eight.”

NOVEMBER (NOVEMBRIS MENSIS)

November comes from *nonus* (“nine”).

DECEMBER (DECEMBER MENSIS)

Decimus means “ten” in Latin. In the early days of the calendar there were only ten months. The Romans were farmers and just stopped counting after December, since farming wasn’t possible anyway and keeping track of the days was meaningless. The calendar would start up again on March 1 as it became clear that the spring equinox was approaching. In about 700 B.C., as Roman culture diversified, two months were tacked on after December.

JANUARY (JANUARIUS)

The new month of Januarius was made the first month of the year in 153 B.C. It was named for the two-headed Roman god Janus, the god who guarded beginnings.



Janus on the proverbial two-headed coin

January originally had 29 days, but Julius Caesar changed it to 31 in 45 B.C., because among the ancient Romans, 31 was considered luckier than 29.

FEBRUARY (FEBRUARIUS)

At the end of the year, February marked the festival of Lupercalia, a time of *februar* (“purification”) in ancient Rome. (One of the activities included beating barren women with thongs of goat leather by holy priests in the hope of making them fertile.)

The month had either 28 or 29 days until 450 B.C. when it was shorted to 23 or 24 days. However, Julius Caesar’s calendar lengthened it again, and he added a leap day at the end of the year every four years to keep the years even. It turned out to be a pretty good way of making up the extra time, even if it isn’t at the end of the year any more.

MERCEDONIUS

Before Julius Caesar, Mercedonius was the thirteenth month. It lasted a varying number of days at the end of the year and functioned to fill in the gaps of the calendar. The name came from the Latin word *merces* (“wages”), because it was the traditional time for year-end wages to be paid. When Julius Caesar lengthened some of the months and created the leap year, he was able to eliminate Mercedonius from the calendar, and so he did.



“BE MINE”

SWEET TALES OF CANDY HEARTS

COAX ME, HUG ME, KISS ME ... you can say a mouthful with candy hearts, the Valentine's Day icon. There's a lot we learned about them. Be our Valentine, and we'll tell you more.

ABOUT 10 BILLION candy message hearts are sold each year. Eighty percent of those are made by the New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) of Cambridge, Massachusetts, founded in 1848.

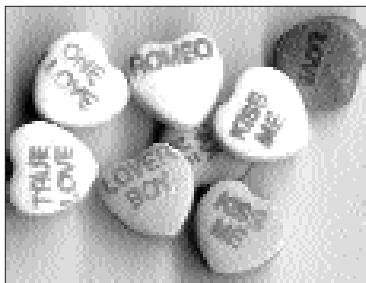
- You can buy the hearts only from January 1 to Valentine's Day. Still, the company keeps three separate plants pumping them out, 18 hours a day, year-round, to keep up with the seasonal demand. Unless Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday, the machines keep making candy hearts for the next year even through the holiday.

- Every minute of the work day, each candy machine makes 12,640 hearts. That's about 45 bags a minute.

- Hearts with messages was the idea of Daniel Chase, brother of NECCO founder Oliver Chase, in the late 1860s. He first put messages *inside* heart-shaped candies that cracked open like fortune cookies. A new process in 1902 made it possible to imprint the messages on candy hearts with food dye.



- Not surprisingly, considering its name, the company also makes Neccos, those coin-sized chalky candies that come in rolls of many colors. The hearts use the Necco recipe rolled extra thick.



- Originally, NECCO Valentine's hearts (called Motto Hearts) were much bigger than today's version. They were big enough to feature sayings like "Oh my dear, do not squeal, you're safe with me in the automobile."
- The maximum inscription length for the small hearts nowadays is two lines, six letters per line.
- Today, dough for the hearts (sugar, corn syrup, corn starch, xanthan gum, pecan syrup, color, and flavor) is made in batches weighing 550

pounds. The dough is then rolled into yard-wide sheets, stamped with red sayings, and cut into heart shapes.

- Don't like the message you've gotten? There are 125 different phrases. Each year, the company replaces a handful of old phrases with new ones.

- Retired phrases over the years include HUBBA HUBBA, GROOVY, HANG TEN, DIG ME, BUZZ OFF, STOP, HOT STUFF, TRY ME, BAD BOY, SAY YES, and R-U GAY?

- NECCO rolls with the times, though. New phrases today include MEGABYTE, GO GIRL, YOU ROCK, BE MY ICON, FAX ME, TRES CHIC, WHAT'S UP, VOGUE, and URA QT. Spanish language hearts are also available (BELLIA, AMOR, ADIOS).

- The company gets requests from people year 'round, desperate to find a MARRY ME heart to propose marriage. They try to oblige, says a spokesperson—"How could we refuse?"

"My advice to you is get married: if you find a good wife you'll be happy; if not, you'll become a philosopher." —Socrates

"Only choose in marriage a woman whom you would choose as a friend if she were a man." —Joseph Joubert