



We're 50 percent more likely to respond with a grin to someone else's grin than we are to a frown, research from North Dakota State University finds. Smile and pass it on.

Your prettiest smile. *Ever.*

A simple upward curve of your mouth could be the secret weapon to being healthier and happier and looking gorgeous. The best part: It's free.

By Jenna Mahoney Photographs by Lauren Darmon

5 really good reasons to smile (right now!)

You'll feel sexier. Your smile might be your top asset. In a study by the American Association of Orthodontists, people rated faces (regardless of physical characteristics) with beaming smiles as more attractive than those with not-so-big-grins. More support for smiling: Women with great smiles and no makeup on were considered better-looking than those with makeup and a straight face, U.K. study from Wrigley gum notes.

You'll have healthier relationships. Reams of research proves that smilers have an easier time making friends (that's First Day of School 101) and—more important—keeping them. And meaningful connections are linked to lowering your risk for heart disease, says Brooke Aggarwal, Ed.D., a research scientist at Columbia University Medical Center/NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City. "Strong social networks [quality, not quantity] positively influence lifestyle choices such as exercise and eating habits," she says. "Feeling unsupported may lead to stress and depression, which correlate to a higher risk for cardiovascular disease." Laughter is the best medicine after all.

You'll be in a cheery mood. A truly joyful smile is when your zygomatic muscles, which raise the corners of your mouth, as well as your orbicularis oculi muscles, which lift your cheeks and form crow's-feet, contract simultaneously. And it's the only one with major mood boosting benefits: A study by the *American Psychological Association* journal indicates that participants who were told to smile sincerely while watching a video reported feeling happier when the show ended.

You'll live longer. Those who had the biggest smiles lived, on average, seven years longer than their stoic counterparts did, a study in *Psychological Science* shows. And that's definitely something to smile about.

You'll look fitter. Want to appear toned without the agony of squats? Yes, please! People with "perfect" smiles (white, aligned teeth) are considered more athletic than those with bad teeth, a study in *The American Journal of Orthodontics and Dento facial Orthopedics* reveals. Braces, anyone?

Got a minute?

Choose the color(s) you love from these expert-approved teeth-whitening shades and you'll make over your smile with a single swipe.

Pale pink Instead of blah nudes that make teeth look more yellow, pick brightening shimmery pinks. says Marissa Nemes, a makeup artist in Miami.

Sheer pink A hydrating, see-through gloss with a hint of a berry tint (versus Orangy versions like coral) counteracts subtle yellowing.



People have about 19 different smiles — including ones that convey fear, grief or glee. So you can find an excuse to smile all day long.

Have a happy mouth

Sure, you know the basics, but these healthy-smile techniques take teeth cleaning to a whole new level.

Brush. You might think hard bristles get teeth ultraclean, but they can actually irritate gums, says Timothy Chase, D.D.S., a cosmetic dentist in NYC, who suggests switching to medium-strength bristles and tilting the brush at a 45-degree angle against your gum line while moving in tiny circular motions. We like the soft (and chic!) Reach by Design toothbrush, \$4, (1). Also, follow the oldie-but-goody two-minute rule: Sing "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall" until you hit 87.

Floss. Why bother doing all that work brushing, then skip the grand finale? Over time, neglecting to floss leads to swollen, red gums and—worst of all—periodontal disease. Dr. Chase says. Get into the groove with Philips Sonicare AirFloss, \$90 (2). The battery powered air and water flow cleans effortlessly between teeth and along gums—no strings attached.

Rinse. Not-so-fresh breath can be from naturally occurring sulfuric gases in your mouth. These odor-causing compounds are present mostly in the A.M. but form all day long (and are the real cause of coffee breath). Before you sip, swish with Scope Dual Blast Mouthwash in Fresh Mint, \$6 (3); the sulfur-capturing molecules won't leave you (or others) wincing.

Whiten. When your pearly whites are, well, pearly white, they're probably at their healthiest because you've kissed problem plaque good-bye. Use a toothpaste that contains fluoride, and gentle grittiness (like clay or silica) to buff away surface debris. Try Rembrandt Deeply White toothpaste, \$8 (4), or Dentsite Natural Reflection Toothpaste, \$17 (5). Erase more severe yellowing with an at-home hydrogen peroxide whitening treatment such as Crest 3D White Intensive Professional Effects Whitestrips. \$60 for seven strips (6).



Chew. Besides removing bacteria in the mouth, saliva naturally carries good bacteria that protect against oral diseases such as periodontitis. Pop a stick of sugarless and antioxidant-laced Vitacare Whitening Gum, \$2 for 12 pieces (7), between brushings to stimulate saliva production.

Protect. Teeth and gum sensitivity worsens after a pro cleaning, surgery or (eek!) smoking. Relieve and prevent inflammation with PerioSciences AO ProVantage treatment \$43 (8), a light gel with soothing antioxidants that you apply directly along gums.

Light pink Bolder than see-through glosses, these matte rose shades have just the right amount of blue undertones to minimize slight yellowish tinges on teeth.

Bright pink Whether bubble gum or fuchsia, these electric blue-based colors dramatically brighten, says Edward Cruz, a makeup artist in NYC.



Smile superfoods

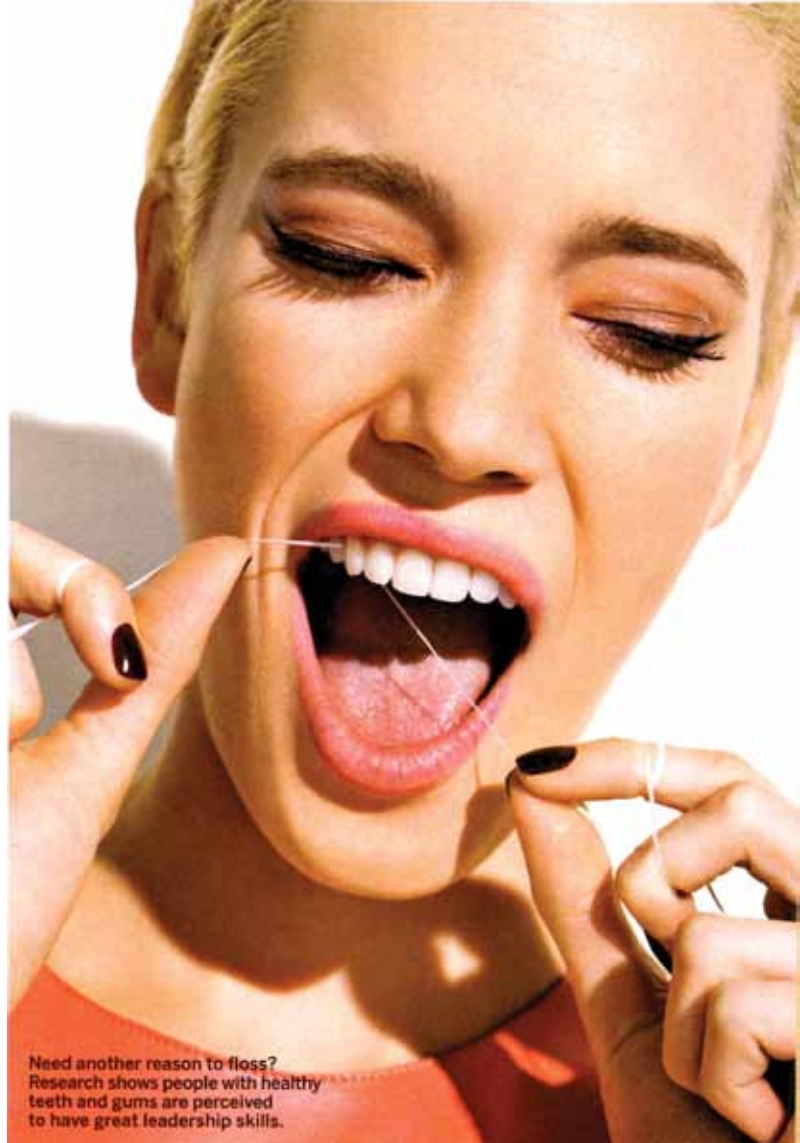
Cheese Looks like the French are on to something with that postmeal *fromage* course. Cheese contains calcium, which strengthens teeth as well as the jaw. And its waxy texture helps brush away food particles, Dr. Chase says.

Green tea This beverage is packed with polyphenol antioxidants that fight plaque-forming free radicals and help prevent gum disease. Brew your tea with plain old tap water, which is fortified with fluoride, and drink it after meals because antioxidants curb bad breath, too.

Mushrooms The most common natural source of vitamin D in the produce section, these fungi help you absorb tooth-strengthening calcium. Also, research suggests that a component in shiitake mushrooms may prevent cavities by lowering plaque buildup, says Jackie Newgent, R.D., author of *Big Green Cookbook*.

Pistachios Like most nuts, pistachios have huge amounts of magnesium, which increases the absorption of calcium; they also have beta-carotene, which may lessen gum inflammation, the main cause of periodontal disease.

Yogurt Probiotics, aka good bacteria, don't do only your digestive tract good. According to research, probiotic-rich foods like yogurt offer protection against gum disease by lowering levels of bad bacteria in the mouth. Plus, yogurt is a solid source of calcium, whey protein and phosphorus, the ultimate strong-tooth trio, Newgent says. (Mix in, don't spill, the liquid lingering on top; it's the stuff that hits the protein sweet spot.)



Need another reason to floss? Research shows people with healthy teeth and gums are perceived to have great leadership skills.

Laugh your way skinny

You burn 40 calories laughing for 15 minutes (not easy but more fun than crunches)!

Bright red These bold, opaque reds can make teeth appear up to two shades whiter, Nemes says. Apply two layers straight from the tube for a more intense effect.

Deep red It's little surprise that the classic femme fatale color creates the ultimate sexy smile. Apply color with your finger for a lasting stainlike finish.



Exude Lip Gloss In Scarlet Red, \$29

MAC Pro Fusion Pink Lipstick \$15

Victoria's Secret Perfect Lipstick in Showstopper, \$13

Lancôme Golden Hat L'Absolu Rouge in 132, \$29

Benefit Full-Finish Lipstick in Flirt Alert, \$18

Yves Saint Laurent Rouge Volupté Lipstick in Red Taboo, \$34

Rimmel London Lasting Finish Lipstick by Kate Moss in 01, \$5

Nars Pure Matte Lipstick in Mascate, \$25