

Chewing Gum: Informative Speech

Last year as I chose classes for this year, I naively chose to take automotives as my elective. I thought it would be easy and I might actually learn how to fix cars. Boy was I wrong. And when I say boy, I mean Boys. . . . As in, there were lots of boys. There should be a testosterone prerequisite for this class. It turns out that not too many women take automotives. I came to the height of my misery one day when out of extreme boredom, I leaned my head on the desk. When I lifted my head back up, I had a fat wad of gum in my hair. After two hours and many attempts involving ice and peanut butter to remove the gum, I finally had to cut my hair. This struggle led to an epiphany: first, I was going to drop automotives. Second, I was going to write this year's speech on gum. See. . . while I struggled with getting the gum out of my hair, I thought to myself what cruel person invented gum and why is it always getting stuck to me? What purpose does gum serve besides being a nuisance? Today, I come to you with those answers. And surprisingly, gum not only has a juicy history, but it does serve a positive purpose and seems to have a promising future. Today, we will start by unwrapping the rich history of chewing gum. Then we will chew on its multiple health benefits. Then we will blow our hopeful bubbles of what the future might hold for chewing gum.

Let's begin by unwrapping the chewy history of gum. Gum has been with us since the stone age. Anthropologists have unearthed what might be the oldest piece of chewed gum. They estimate that this wad of gum with teeth marks is over 5,000 years old. The prehistoric people chewed **resin**, a gummy substance found in trees. We have evidence that a different form of gum was chewed in ancient Greece. And we have reference to gum showing up in written documents from the 1st century A.D. According to the book, *Bubblemania*, over a thousand years ago, the Mayans discovered that the latex from the sapodilla tree thickens into a gummy

mass upon contact with air. The Mayans called this gummy mass chicle, hence where Chiclets chewing gum today takes its name. It is Hernando Cortes who is responsible for bringing Chicle to Europe. After conquering Mexico, he noticed how white and healthy the Aztec's teeth were. Cortes was not one to accept that he can't have everything, so among all the loot he brought back to Europe was chicle.

It wasn't until the Americans got their hands on it in the late 1800's that what we know as chewing gum today was invented. And we have the Alamo to thank. That's right . . .

Remember the Alamo.? After General Lopez de Santa Anna lost the Alamo to the Americans, he figured that he could sell the Americans enough Chicle to raise an army to take back his power in Mexico. Santa Anna teamed up with an American inventor Thomas Adams who tried unsuccessfully to turn chicle into a new rubber for tires. Adams later figured out that with added flavor, chicle was an enjoyable substance to chew and could be sold for little money but big profit to children. He opened the first gum factory in 1871. And by the 1880's, the entire United States was stuck on chewing gum.

Two other Americans are responsible for the popularity of chewing gum around the world. The first is another inventor, Walter Dimer. According to the book Pop, it is Dimer who dreamed of blowing bubbles with chewing gum. He invented a gum that had the texture that makes blowing bubbles possible. In 1928, the invention of bubble gum catapulted the popularity of chewing gum. The other American responsible for solidifying the popularity of chewing gum is Wrigley, who used advertisement to popularize gum. However, during WWII, the Wrigley Company heard that soldiers used their gum to overcome dry mouths on the battlefield. Wrigley pulled all of its gum off the shelves and donated them to the war effort. Americans returned victorious and after the war, it was an everyday event to chew gum.

Now that the history is unwrapped, we should chew on the importance of gum. Besides helping soldiers with dry mouths, over the last half of the 20th century, people started to discover many benefits of chewing gum. Chew on this According to the American Dental Association, chewing gum produces more saliva which helps to neutralize acids in your stomach as foods break down and can actually help prevent the breaking down of tooth enamel. As you chew your gum, more saliva enters your mouth and the more likely you are to wash away the bacteria that aids in tooth decay. Chewing sugarless gum for just twenty minutes after eating can help prevent tooth decay and can save the enamel on your teeth. Although this is no substitute to brushing and flossing, studies still prove that chewing sugarless gum can greatly help prevent cavities. So next time someone gives you a hard time about chewing gum in class, be sure to let them know that you are merely practicing good dental hygiene.

In addition to giving you a healthier smile, another reason your teachers should let you chew gum in school is because it boosts skills. According to the *Los Angeles Times* from April 2009, chewing gum has been proven to boost academic performance. In one study, researchers asked one group of teenaged students to chew sugar-free gum while participating in math class. They had a control group not chew gum during the same class. They found that those who chewed gum on average showed a three percent better increase on a standardized math. The study claims that chewing gum helped the subjects concentrate and stay focused. I guess this means the kid who stuck the gum to my desk in Autos class was just trying to get a good grade.

And when gum isn't helping you concentrate on school work, it can help you relieve the pain in your ear on plane rides. According to research done by CNN, airplane ear, the stress exerted on your eardrum when a plane is either climbing or descending, can be improved by chewing gum which corrects the difference in air pressure and eases the pain. Again, chewing

causes your mouth to produce extra saliva, and that saliva needs to be swallowed. It is the swallowing that helps equalize the pressure in your ears.

Not only does chewing gum produce more saliva, but it can trick your stomach into thinking you are eating. According to the August 26, 2008 *New York Times*, doctors are prescribing chewing gum after abdominal surgery. After stomach surgery, eating food can cause nausea and vomiting. In order for your stomach to heal, it needs hormones that are released when you eat. The answer to this dilemma: chewing gum. Patients chew gum, which stimulates the gut and produces gastrointestinal hormones. Gum tricks your stomach into thinking you are eating without having to eat.

Now that we have chewed on the many benefits of gum, let's look to its bubbly future. Doctors continue to look at the medicinal use of chewing gum. One place they are looking is at chewing gum as medicine. In a 2006 *European Journal of Clinical Psychology* study, researchers determined that people absorb three times more of an antihistamine when they chewed the medicine in gum form rather than taking a pill. When you swallow a pill, it has to make its way through the digestive system before making it to your bloodstream. If you chew medicinal gum, the medicine enters the bloodstream directly through the lining of the mouth. Think about Nicorette gum that allows nicotine to enter your system without the toxins of smoke. Same idea. Research is still being done on different medicines, but soon our doctors might be prescribing gum to cure our ailments.

With all of these positive and possible uses for gum, you might think chewing gum is perfect. But it isn't, at least not yet. There is still the issue of all the gum that gets stuck to your shoes or makes a mess of public sidewalks. I hate to burst your bubble, but gum is made of synthetic rubber, which is not biodegradable. Once we spit it out, it is here **forever** cluttering our world.

It is this fact that has prompted some clever people to figure out what to do with used gum. First, there is a Toronto-based company, Envirobubble. They have placed gum disposal bins around Canada. They collect the gum and turn it into fertilizer. And then there is the University of Plymouth, who according to the September 22, 2006 *Evening Herald*, is collecting the used gum around campus. They are recycling the gum to use as underlay for sports grounds. According to the June 25, 2008 *Western People*, designer Anna Bullus is recycling used gum into what she calls the Gumnetic Chewy Pad, which works like memory foam. She has made mattresses and cushions for bus seats. You might find the idea of the Chewy Pad gross, but we are already sitting on used gum, it might as well be recycled! Anna Bullus also reported on her website Gumdropin.com that she has plans to recycle gum into mobile phone covers, toys, car tires, and Wellington boots.

And even if the recycling plans don't stick, there is always the revolutionary new chewing gum from Rev7. According to the October 4, 2010 *Evening Star*, Rev7 can be washed off any surface with just water and within 6 months the gum will biodegrade into a fine powder. Since the FDA recently approved it, look at stores soon for this non-sticking, biodegradable gum.

As we can see, gum has been with us for a long time and will continue to evolve to stay relevant in our lives. Today, we unwrapped the history of gum. Then we chewed on its benefits. We then looked at its bubbly future. It's funny when I think of it. I set out to take an automotives class, hoping to gain some knowledge about cars, but I came away with far more useful knowledge. Long after we are done using cars, we will still be munching on chewing gum.