

Good (and not so good) diet choices for a healthy mouth

What you eat and drink can affect your oral health in both good ways and bad, and some choices are better than others.

Good

Many of the foods physicians recommend for a healthy body also benefit your teeth and gums.

Water

Beyond keeping you hydrated, water can rinse away potentially harmful sugar, acid and other food particles left behind from food and other beverages.

Fluoride: Water with fluoride can be especially beneficial to protect against cavities. Ask your dentist about fluoride and how much is best for you.

Dairy

Rich in calcium, vitamin D and protein, dairy products can help your teeth stay strong. Choose options without added sugar, like cheese, milk and plain yogurt.

Lactose Intolerant? Try fortified products, and ask your physician or dentist if calcium supplements are right for you.

Lean protein

Not only are they rich in bone-building protein, but poultry, eggs and fish also contain phosphorus – this mineral helps maximize the benefits of calcium.

Most fruits and vegetables

With their high fiber and water content, many of these healthy diet staples can act as natural teeth cleaners. The action of chewing them encourages saliva production, helping to rid your mouth of other harmful substances.

A note of caution: Despite their many benefits, some fruits and vegetables contain high levels of sugar and/or acid. Be sure to rinse with water after consuming options like lemon and grapefruit.

Nuts

Nuts are rich in protein and typically low in plaque-causing carbohydrates.

Be careful: Nuts with harder textures, such as whole almonds, have been known to break teeth.

Not so good

Take caution and consider moderation when eating or drinking any of these. Drinking water and rinsing throughout the day can also help minimize damage.

Citrus

Acidic citrus fruits, such as oranges and lemons, can erode tooth enamel and irritate mouth sores.

Coffee and tea

The caffeine in coffee and tea can lead to dry mouth, and both also have high acid content. Frequent consumption may stain teeth.

Most flavored beverages

Sugar- and acid-packed sodas aren't the only culprits. Even nutritious juices and sugar-free beverages can be high in acid.

Some bottled waters

Some bottled water brands contain lower pH levels than pure water. This means a higher acid content. Consider drinking tap water or choosing a brand with a higher pH (look for pH listed on the label).

Alcohol

Alcohol contributes to dehydration and dry mouth, and research shows that heavier drinkers can have more severe gum disease. Alcohol consumption has also been linked to oral cancer.



Sources:
Top 9 Foods that Damage Your Teeth; American Dental Association
Good Foods for Dental Health; American Dental Association
Phosphorus; University of Maryland Medical Center; 2015
Drinking alcohol may worsen periodontal disease; Dr. Bicuspid; 2015

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