

Nutrition and Your Teeth

Be choosy about what you chew.



Choosing the best foods for your teeth is part common sense, part knowledge. Foods that are good for you: those that are high in calcium, vitamin A, and phosphorus. Foods that are bad for you: sticky or sugary foods and foods that dry your mouth.

DO Chews

Here's a list of good-for-you foods and some reasons:¹

- Cheese: reduces the amount of acid in your mouth, which lowers the risk of decay. It has calcium and protein.
- Yogurt (sugar-free): introduces good bacteria to crowd out the bacteria that causes cavities.
- Dark, leafy greens: contain folic acid. Many are high in calcium. Both minerals strengthen bones and teeth.
- Apples, carrots, celery: have fiber and water to produce saliva and rinse away bacteria. The texture stimulates gums to improve blood flow.
- Nuts and seeds: have calcium, protein, and a satisfying crunch. They are also low in sugar.

Five Habits to Start Now

- 1 Drink plenty of water, ideally water that contains fluoride (like tap water). Fluoride in water is shown to reduce cavities by 25 percent.⁴
- 2 Chew sugar-free gum bearing the ADA seal after meals to reduce acid and delay the formation of plaque.³
- 3 Limit sugar calories to three tablespoons per day.³
- 4 Limit between-meal snacks to three.¹
- 5 If you smoke, quit!

DON'T Chews

Here's a list of some cavity culprits:²

- Bread: quickly turns to sugar. It becomes gummy and sticks between your teeth.
- Alcohol: dries the mouth, reducing much-needed saliva.
- Carbonated sodas: have acids that attack teeth. Caramel color stains them. Drinks with caffeine cause dry mouth.
- Ice: can damage tooth enamel and make you susceptible to future dental emergencies.
- Citrus has enamel-eroding acids. It can also irritate mouth sores.
- Potato chips: are loaded with starch that turns to sugar.
- Dried fruits: cling to teeth and leave behind lots of bacteria-feeding sugar.

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1 <https://www.colgate.com/en-us/oral-health/basics/nutrition-and-oral-health>,
February 2018.

2 <https://www.healthline.com/health/dental-and-oral-health/worst-foods-for-your-teeth#7>,
February 2018.

3 <https://www.mouthhealthy.org>, accessed January 2019.

4 <https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/basics/index.htm>, June 2016.

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