

Essential Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamin D – Helps keep strong, healthy teeth and jawbones. Vitamin D can be found in sardines, salmon, and some milk that is fortified with Vitamin D. Your body also uses sunlight to create Vitamin D.

Vitamin C – Commonly found in most fresh fruits and vegetables, Vitamin C is important for healthy gums. Lack of Vitamin C can cause scurvy – a condition that may result in swollen and bleeding gums.

Calcium – The building block of your bones and teeth. Low-fat milk and dairy products are rich in calcium. Calcium also reduces risk of gum disease.

Beta-Carotene (Vitamin A) – Important for bone growth and making healthy tooth enamel. Your body turns beta-carotene into Vitamin A. Beta-Carotene is found many orange foods like sweet potatoes, carrots, and cantaloupe. Dark, leafy, green vegetables like spinach are also a good source.

*For more information about vitamins and minerals, go to <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/vitamins.html>.

- 1 Academy of General Dentistry, Oral Health Resources, <http://www.agd.org/public/oralhealth/Default.asp?IssID=315&Topic=N&ArtID=1274#body>
- 2 NCHS Data Brief, No. 71, August 2011
- 3 American Dental Association, "Saliva," <http://www.ada.org/3005.aspx?currentTab=1>
- 4 "Dentists Should Advise Vegetarians on Good Oral Health," Academy of General Dentistry, <http://www.agd.org/public/oralhealth/Default.asp?IssID=315&Topic=N&ArtID=1273#body>

There are many places to find more information about how your diet affects the health of your mouth.

American Dental Association
www.ada.org

Academy of General Dentistry
www.knowyourteeth.com

USDA Dietary Guidelines
www.ChooseMyPlate.gov

Always consult your personal doctor and dentist about health questions.



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Watch Your Mouth!

What to Feed Your Smile: Oral Health and Nutrition



Healthy Smiles for a Healthy Future

“You may be able to prevent two of the most common diseases in modern society, tooth decay and gum disease, simply by improving your diet.”

--Academy of General Dentistry

Decay happens when acids created by bacteria start to destroy the teeth and other tissues in the mouth¹.

Certain foods are believed to cause higher levels of that bacteria. It is important to eat a diet rich in nutrients that make strong teeth and avoid foods and drinks that speed decay.

Tooth-Healthy Snacking

When you snack, stay away from foods that cling to your teeth. Soft, sweet, sticky foods like cakes, candy and dried fruits are high in sugar can speed up tooth decay¹.

There are plenty of foods that can fight your mid-afternoon hunger and are healthy for your teeth.

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Nuts (low sodium)
- Plain crackers with low-fat cheese
- Low-fat dairy products
- Sugarless gum or candy.

Tip: If it's crunchy and has water in it, it will be good for your mouth!

Slow down on the sugar!

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says people are drinking more sugar drinks than ever before. About half of Americans drink a sugar drink every day²!

Sugar drinks like soda, fruit drinks, energy drinks, and sport drinks, contain sugar, additives, and acids that destroy tooth enamel.

You can protect your teeth by cutting back the amount of sugar drinks. If you choose to drink sugar drinks, be sure to rinse your mouth with water afterwards to clean away leftover sugar and acid.

Saliva

You probably haven't spent much time thinking about how important saliva is to the health of your mouth, but eating and drinking to produce enough saliva is very important.

Saliva is like the bloodstream of your mouth. It carries important minerals that keep the tissues in your mouth healthy. Plus, it cleans food bits and harmful bacteria away from your teeth and gums³.

The easiest way to make saliva is by chewing crunchy foods that work your jaw muscles. Chewing gum actually produces saliva at 10 times the normal rate³!

For Vegetarians:

Many people choose vegetarian or vegan diets for health reasons or ethical concerns.

Long-term vegetarian diets, especially those that do not contain dairy, can leave a person without the right amounts of calcium, Vitamin D, and Vitamin B12, which can lead to gum disease and tooth loss⁴.

It is possible to keep your mouth healthy while eating a vegetarian diet with the right amount of fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes. If dairy products are not part of your diet, look for substitutes that have calcium and Vitamin D.

Talk to a doctor or a registered dietitian to make sure your diet has enough vitamins and minerals.

Connect to [MyPlate.gov](https://www.MyPlate.gov) for diet guidelines.

