

**Natural Oral Care: Supports for Consideration**

**W**hat you do between dental checkups and cleanings and how you care for your teeth and gums are vital to having a healthy mouth!

**Eat, Drink to Oral Health!****Drink More Water!**

Nothing hydrates you as well, is cheaper, or better for your teeth.

**Drink Unsweetened Tea**

Research suggests that polyphenols in tea may slow the growth of bacteria. They may also undermine the ability of bacteria to clump together and stick to teeth in the form of plaque

**Eat Crunchy Foods**

Almonds, apples, carrots, celery not only have healthy nutrients but also their calcium and vitamins help promote healthy bones and gum tissues. Also, almonds are a good source of protein without sugar.

Crunchy foods are also good snacks because they scrape plaque away from teeth and stimulate saliva to flow. The increased flow of saliva helps flush away some plaque, neutralize acids, and turn the pH in the mouth toward a level the

restores mineral into the surface of dental enamel.

**Snack on Hard Cheese**

It neutralizes acid, stimulates saliva, doesn't have processed sugar, and can be a very satisfying snack.

**Produce**

Apples, celery, carrots, cucumbers, pears, lettuce and the like clean teeth, help remove dental plaque, and clear away bacteria. Crunchy fruits and vegetables also increase the flow of saliva, massage the gums, and clean between teeth to help prevent gum disease. Greens (such as collards and kale) are high in calcium.

**Get rid of sweetened beverages!**

They are bad for blood sugar and especially bad for teeth! Any drinks that contain sugar "feed" the bacteria in the mouth, which produce acids that can slowly erode the surface of teeth and promote decay.

If you absolutely love a favorite sweet tea, sweetened coffee, etc., it's better to drink it quickly or with a meal that to sip over a longer period of time. The reason is that sipping a beverage causes the pH of the mouth to drop with every sip and doesn't allow saliva enough opportunity to neutralize the change in pH and return to normal.

Artificially sweetened beverages are often acidic, which can directly erode the mineral of enamel and

promote softening of the teeth and decay.

**Food and Digestion**

A balanced, healthy diet is one of our main lines of defense. Fresh produce, nuts & seeds, legumes, lean meats and whole grains help the body fight against inflammation and bad bacteria. There is good bacteria in the mouth, as in the digestive system. We want the good bacteria to be on the lookout for bad bacteria so they can alert the right processes to take care of the bad guys.

**Breastfeeding for Oral Health**

Breastfeeding helps to create a good fit between the upper and lower teeth by exercising the mouth structure, facial and oral muscles. It promotes healthy palate formation, helps position the tongue properly and increases the flow of saliva.

**Caring for Your Oral Health****Oil Pulling or Swishing**

Oil pulling originated some 3000 to 5000 years ago in India as part of natural healing practices and it is believed to strengthen gums, whiten teeth, reduce plaque, and remove toxins from the mouth. It also helps with saliva production and is good exercise for the mouth muscles. Popular oils used for this practice are coconut, sunflower, and sesame.

To try this natural support, once a day take a teaspoon of oil and place it in the mouth. Swish it back and forth through the teeth for 5 minutes then spit it out. NOTE: Do not swallow oil or gargle with oil. Over the course of several weeks,

work your way up to a tablespoon of oil for 15 -20 minutes. *Not a substitute for teeth brushing.*

**Toothbrush Alternatives**

Teeth cleaning sticks: twigs of particular trees are chewed to create a frayed end for tooth cleaning. This practice date backs to Babylonia in 3500 BC and Egypt in 3000 BC. They are made from sassafras, licorice, and other healthy, tasty trees and are available at health food stores. If you are working to avoid plastics in your life, teeth cleaning twigs may be an option!

**Herbs for Oral Health**

Many herbs support oral health! Some stimulate blood flow to the gums and are anti-bacterial such as peppermint, spearmint, fennel, cinnamon, sage, and thyme. Brew these herbs like tea and use as a gargle and mouthwash. Echinacea can be used as a gargle or rinse for immune boosting and healing.

**Read the label!**

Soda, water, mouthwash, toothpaste, gum, snack foods, processed foods and treats can all contain ingredients that are harmful to oral health. The number one culprit is sugar. And not just white, refined sugar. Be on the lookout for all the "-ose"s: sucrose, fructose, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose. This includes raw sugar, agave, and honey. White flour (in starchy foods such as crackers and bread) turns into simple sugars in your mouth. Phosphoric acid and citric acid are two other tooth eroding ingredients commonly found in soda and soft drinks.

A few of the chemicals to watch for in toothpaste are triclosan, aspartame, saccharin, sorbitol, sodium lauryl sulfate (found in many soaps and detergents as well), dyes, and fluoride.

**Natural Oral Health Supports Can Be Affordable!**

Use food subsidies such as EBT, WIC-Project Fresh, and DUFEB to increase the amount of fresh, healthy produce in your family's diet and to purchase items such as coconut oil.

**Recipes****Toothpaste**

A simple and effective tooth cleaning paste can be made from coconut oil, a little baking soda, and a drop or two of peppermint, lemon, or other favorite essential oil. Baking soda by itself is good, but watch for sensitivity. Don't brush too hard or use for everyday cleaning.

**Mouthwash**

A simple mouthwash can be made by adding a cinnamon stick and a few cloves to a cup of boiling water. Let steep until cool. Add 5 drops of peppermint oil. Store in a glass bottle and shake well to mix before using. Plain hydrogen peroxide can be used as a mouthwash as well.

**Simple Treatment for Toothache**

To get you through the night until a dentist appointment or for cutting wisdom teeth. Bite down on a clove in the painful area. Cloves are a natural anesthetic. A moistened peppermint tea bag can also help with tooth pain.



*Please note: The information provided is for educational purposes and is not intended to replace professional dental care. Nor is the information to be taken as a cure or prescription for dental issues.*

Links and resources for further reading:

[American Dental Association - Diet and Dental Health](#)

[What to Eat to Keep Your Teeth - Delta Dental](#)

[Sugar Blues](#) by William Dufty

[Dentistry For Babies](#)

[Center for Science in the Public Interest](#)

[Environmental Working Group](#)

*The Earthwise Herbal, Vol. I and II*, Author, Matthew Wood, Herbalist

*20,000 Secrets of Tea*, Author, Victoria Zak

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