

Wellness Wednesday



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The 6 Worst Foods And Drinks For Your Teeth, According To Dentists

Beware of cavities and tooth fractures. Here's how to protect your dental health.

With the risks of deadly viruses and unexpected disease, it can be easy to forget about your dental health. But it's important to prioritize. Studies show that there may be a connection between your dental health and cardiovascular disease, and even links to rheumatoid arthritis.

"If you don't treat your mouth well, there's bacteria that can grow and cause disease, but also, those bacteria can cause issues in other parts of the body," said Dr. Kim Capehart, chair of the Department of General Dentistry at Augusta University in Georgia.



Additionally, ongoing tooth pain can impact your mental health, Capehart said. All of this means dental issues are something you want to avoid — and treat — when possible.

When it comes to keeping your teeth healthy, there are certain foods and drinks that dentists say are particularly harmful; some create a breeding ground for cavities, while others can cause actual tooth fractures. Below, dentists share which foods and drinks are most hazardous to your teeth and what you can do to protect them.

Citrus

While citrus is beneficial for our health because it's an excellent source of vitamin C, its acidic nature makes it tough on your teeth. Citrus can make the acidity levels in your mouth increase, according to Dr. Jossen Gastelum, a dentist based in Arizona who posts dental health tips on his TikTok channel.

"Oranges or grapefruits, just basically any citrus ... can cause that pH in your mouth to decrease, which makes it acidic," Gastelum said. That can result in demineralization of the tooth or destruction of the enamel.

Ice

"I know a lot of people really like ice — that is not good for your teeth," Capehart said, pointing out that the cold temperature of ice can be tough for people with sensitive teeth, and the hardness can lead to tooth fractures.

Drinking a glass of water with ice does not necessarily carry a threat; this mostly occurs if you're chewing it. "Believe it or not, lots of people eat ice ... they'll just get a cup of ice and just start eating it," Capehart. For those people, the risk of damage to the teeth is high.

Sticky Candy

"I pretty much try to tell my patients anything that's acidic or sticky, you want to kind of stay away from because they're very harmful for your teeth," Capehart said.

This includes toffees, caramels, gummy worms and anything similar. They can get stuck in the grooves of your teeth and be difficult to brush out, which means pieces of candy can get left behind, according to Capehart.

The result? "Anything that stays on your teeth that's not supposed to with sugar ... that all that can cause cavities," Capehart said.

Bread And Crackers

Capehart said that bread can be sticky, too, which means it can also get stuck in your teeth and cause dental problems. Bread eventually turns into sugar, which can cause cavities.

Gastelum added that crackers are harmful for the same reason, especially for kids. "And those crackers are usually made out of some type of a carbohydrate, which becomes a sugar that then the bacteria [can] also cause damage on your teeth," Gastelum explained.

Soda And Energy Drinks

An obvious harmful drink is soda, Gastelum said, but you may be shocked at just how much it can hurt your mouth. "Sodas can be super acidic. They can be at acidity levels close to battery acid," he explained.

In fact, Gastelum said there is a term called "Mountain Dew mouth."

"People that actually are chronic drinkers of Mountain Dew ... actually come in and sometimes can exhibit decay or even destruction in their mouth, similar to people that are doing meth or something like that," Gastelum said.

Coffee

Sorry, java lovers: Coffee is another acidic beverage that can damage your teeth, Capehart said. This is true whether you drink your coffee black or with a sweetener, Gastelum added.

For those who add sugar to their cup of joe, it's doubly harmful because of the sugars that are swirling around in your mouth. Another ding against coffee? It stains your teeth, according to Capehart.

Foods That Can Promote Good Dental Health

Thankfully, there are foods and drinks that can improve your teeth. Start with crunchy veggies.

"Carrots and crunchy vegetables, I mean that's just good for your health overall, but for your teeth ... when you go in there and chew, it helps clean it," Capehart said.

According to Capehart, apples also fall into this category, and Gastelum noted that celery is good for your teeth, too. "Those are really crunchy foods that can help to mechanically remove plaque as you're eating them," said Gastelum.

Another beneficial food? "The fun one that I like to mention is cheese," Gastelum said. "Cheese is actually pretty good for your teeth and can actually be used ... to neutralize some of the acids in your mouth."



Additionally, cheese contains calcium, which "helps fortify your teeth, and then it stimulates saliva," he noted, adding that this helps bring the pH levels in your mouth back to baseline.

Finally, don't sleep on beverages like water, milk and green tea. They can help maintain healthy acidity levels in your mouth. Tea can also "be a good substitute for people that really like to have like coffee all the time," Gastelum noted.

Other Important Oral Hygiene To-Dos

Brushing and flossing your teeth are important oral health basics, but there's more you can do, too.

Gastelum said you should rinse your mouth with water or a pH-alkaline mouth rinse like TheraBreath immediately after eating or drinking to help neutralize the acidity in your mouth. "You should also wait at least 30 minutes to brush to allow for your saliva to properly buffer those acids," he said.



MEDITERRANEAN TURKEY MEATBALLS

466 Calories | Serving: 1 bowl | Prep: 15 mins | Cook: 15 mins | Total: 30 mins
YIELD: 4 servings | Course: Dinner | Cuisine: Mediterranean

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large egg
- ¼ cup fresh chopped dill
- ¼ cup fresh chopped Italian parsley
- ¼ cup unseasoned panko breadcrumbs
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 pound 93% lean ground turkey
- Olive oil spray

For the bowl:

- 1 ½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 1/3 cup dry pearl Israeli couscous, I used whole wheat
- 1 ¾ cup reduced-sodium chicken, or vegetable broth
- 1 cup diced tomato
- 2 cups Persian or English cucumber, diced
- ¼ cup red onion, diced
- 3 tablespoons Italian parsley, fresh chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, from half a lemon
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Lemon wedges, for serving
- ½ cup tzatziki or nonfat plain Greek yogurt, optional, for serving

These Mediterranean Meatballs are made with flavorful ground turkey. Serve over Israeli couscous and a bright, lemony cucumber tomato salad. Make them in the air fryer or oven!

The meatballs brown beautifully in the air fryer, which works out great during the warmer months, so you don't heat up your kitchen. If you don't have an air fryer, you can make them in the oven. The couscous cooks quickly and is an excellent base for fresh Israeli salad and lemon juice. This dish is great to meal prep for lunch or make for a quick week-night family dinner.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 bowl, Calories: 466 kcal, Carbohydrates: 48 g, Protein: 31 g, Fat: 16 g, Saturated Fat: 3 g, Cholesterol: 130 mg, Sodium: 644 mg, Fiber: 4.5 g, Sugar: 3 g



INSTRUCTIONS



1. In a medium mixing bowl, beat egg with a fork. Add the herbs, panko, garlic, salt and pepper and mix to combine.
2. Add the turkey and with the fork, mix to combine, being careful not to over-mix. Roll mixture into 16 evenly sized meatballs, about 1 ounce each, place on a parchment lined sheet pan and set aside until ready to cook. (Thoroughly wash your hands and work surface.)
3. **To air fry:** Spray the air fryer basket generously with olive oil. Add the meatballs in an even layer, cooking in batches if needed, and cook at 400 degrees F for 8- 10 minutes, turning halfway through cook time. **To bake in the oven:** bake on a sheet pan 400F 20 minutes, no need to turn.
4. Meanwhile, heat a small sauce pot over medium heat.
5. Add ½ tablespoon olive oil and the dry couscous and sauté to toast the grains for about 3 minutes. Add the hot broth, bring to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer, cover and cook for about 10 minutes, or until all the liquid is absorbed. Add a pinch of salt, if needed.
6. While meatballs and couscous are cooking, make the salad. In a small bowl, combine the tomato, cucumber, red onion, 3 tablespoons parsley, 1 tablespoon olive oil, lemon juice, ½ teaspoon salt and pepper, to taste.
7. **To assemble bowls:** Add ¾ cup each of couscous to 4 bowls. Top with ¾ cup salad and 4 meatballs. Serve with a lemon wedge, a dollop of tzatziki or yogurt (if desired) and drizzle of oil, if using.

FEATURED EXERCISE

https://www.self.com/gallery/kettlebell-exercises-that-strengthen-stabilize-core?intcid=inline_ampFeatured Exercise ► **Sit-up to Press-up**» **Do it:**

Targets the core, pecs, deltoids, biceps, and triceps.

- Lie faceup with your knees bent and feet flat, holding a kettlebell with both hands at your chest. This is the starting position.
- Using your abs, lift your body up until you are sitting upright, back straight. At the same time, press the weight overhead, extending both arms until your elbows are straight.
- Slowly lower back to the starting position. This is 1 rep.



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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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