

Stronger Teeth and Gums

Eat these power foods to strengthen your teeth and gums

You know that some foods are bad for your dental health - but did you know that some foods are actually good for it? "Eating specific foods can strengthen and naturally whiten teeth and kill toxic bacteria in your mouth," says Melvin Pierson, D.D.S., spokesperson for the Academy of General Dentistry. So dig in and fight tooth decay the natural way.

Rebuild enamel Yogurt, cheese, and milk are good sources of calcium, which helps shore up tooth enamel and strengthen the bone around your teeth. By forming a temporary coating on your teeth, calcium also deflects natural acids in your mouth and helps prevent decay.

Boost gum health Grapefruit aids in wound healing and was shown to decrease gum bleeding in a German study. In addition, it prevents the collagen network in your gums from breaking down and loosening around your teeth. Grapefruit's acid can, however, temporarily reduce the strength of your tooth enamel, so dentists recommend waiting at least 30 minutes after eating grapefruit to brush your teeth. And grapefruit interacts with some medicines, so check with your pharmacist if you plan to start eating it regularly.

Bust bacteria Kiwis, oranges, limes, cranberries, and strawberries are rich with vitamin C, a powerful killer of oral bacteria. Green tea contains catechins that kill bacteria in the mouth. Spicy foods such as wasabi have phytochemicals that inhibit the growth of germs.

Smell sweeter Some herbs naturally freshen the breath you exhale. Mint and parsley kill bacteria in the mouth. Plus, they contain monoterpenes, substances that move rapidly through the bloodstream to your lungs to counter the odor in your mouth.

Stop stains Cauliflower, spinach, lettuce, and broccoli are all sources of minerals that create a protective film on teeth and help prevent red wine, cola, or coffee stains from penetrating the enamel. Strawberries have bleaching elements to brighten your smile, while hard, crunchy foods such as carrots, nuts, and seeds help slough off plaque. Chewing raw veggies also stimulates saliva, which neutralizes acids and strengthens teeth using vitamins and minerals from the foods.