

NUTRITION

# 4 Habits That Are More Relevant to Your Dental Health Than Tooth Brushing

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So you want to take your dental health to the next level? Pat yourself on the back! What most people don't realize when they leave the dentist's office is that tooth brushing is only part of the equation. In truth, your toothbrush is most effective when combined with other health practices. In addition, positive effects are compounded when habits are consistently maintained over time. Keep reading to find to get started with four habits your teeth will thank you for.

## EATING HEALTHY GREENS

Raw vegetables have been referred to as "nature's toothbrush," for their ability to scrape food debris off of teeth while you chew. Fruits and vegetables with a high fiber and water content

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largely made up of enamel, which is strengthened by the nutrients you absorb through your diet. In particular, leafy greens provide significant nutrient value, with the greatest benefits coming from organic options.

Here are just a few examples of green nutrients and their dental benefits:

- **Antioxidants** (encourage oral healing and counteract free radicals)
- **Anthocyanins** (reduce inflammation and act as an antibacterial for gums and teeth)
- **Calcium** (strengthens tooth enamel)
- **Folic acid** (fosters whole-body health and prevents gum disease)
- **Phosphorus** (defends and restores enamel)
- **Potassium** (helps the stomach produce acid for digestion, which decreases cavity-causing GERD symptoms)
- **Magnesium** (fortifies enamel, aids in calcium absorption, and curbs tooth decay)
- **Vitamin A** (safeguards your mucosal barriers from allergens, and helps with breathing and tooth growth)
- **Vitamin C** (reduces gum infection and bleeding)
- **Vitamin E** (lowers inflammation)
- **Vitamin K1** (stimulates blood clotting and decreases bleeding)
- **Vitamin K2** (improves your mouth's pH and shields your teeth from plaque and bacteria)

## NOT SNACKING

Many dental problems, including cavities, are caused by oral acidity, which increases any time you consume food. Every time you eat, whether it's a meal, a fruit snack, or even most drinks, it takes more than 20 minutes for the mouth's pH levels to neutralize again.

This means that if you're continually snacking, your mouth becomes a perpetually acidic environment, which ultimately leads to cavities and gum disease. The longer acid is allowed to remain in your mouth, the more time it has to weaken your tooth enamel.

## FLOSSING



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As bacteria mingle with food debris and protein, a gooey biofilm called plaque grows over the surfaces of your teeth. When left alone, plaque can harden into tartar, which is difficult to remove without a trip to the dentist. Ultimately, tartar that isn't removed leads to gingivitis and cavities.

Luckily, flossing can remove plaque before it gets to that stage. In fact, because our teeth have 5 surfaces that can't all be reached with a toothbrush, flossing actually does around 40% of the heavy lifting when it comes to keeping your teeth clean.

## DRINKING ENOUGH WATER

Human saliva is 99% water, and dehydration makes us susceptible to dry mouth, a major cause of tooth decay and oral thrush. In addition, the water in saliva dilutes sugars and acids, while also rinsing infection-causing bacteria from your mouth. In other words, saliva protects your teeth from decay.

In order for your body to produce adequate saliva, however, you need to stay hydrated. The human body is more than 60% water, meaning that hydration is essential to the proper working of your immune system. What's more, your organs rely on water to clear toxins—including those found in cavities—from your system.

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