

Benefits Spotlight

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5 Vitamins and Nutrients That Keep Mouths Healthy

It's common knowledge that vitamins and minerals are vital for maintaining a healthy body – and a healthy mouth. But do you know what function each substance serves? Here's a quick guide to the top five vitamins and minerals that make your mouth smile.

Calcium

Calcium not only plays a major role in building strong teeth, it's also responsible for the strength of your bones. Milk, yogurt and cheese are all great sources of calcium. For non-dairy foods, try soybeans, dried figs, broccoli and turnip greens to reach your recommended daily calcium intake.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium – without it, your body breaks down bone to get the calcium it needs. Good sources of vitamin D include fortified milk and cereals, fatty fish and exposure to sunlight.

Phosphorus

After calcium, phosphorus is the most abundant mineral in the body – and 85 percent of it is found in bones and teeth, contributing to the strength of these structures. Phosphorus is found in many foods, so you're likely obtaining enough of the mineral just by eating pork, beef, chicken, fish, tofu and eggs.

Potassium

Having enough potassium boosts bone mineral density, which helps teeth and bones retain calcium. Bananas are a well-known source of potassium, but the mineral is also found in sweet potatoes, prunes, carrots, orange juice and fish.

Vitamin K

Vitamin K plays a part in bone health by helping produce osteocalcin, which helps prevent the breakdown of bone. This includes your jawbone, which helps keep teeth in place. Get your daily dose by eating spinach, asparagus, broccoli, soybeans, eggs, strawberries and meats.

5 Pet Dental Health Facts

We rounded up some of our favorite interesting facts about the oral health of our four-legged (and two-finned) friends.

1. **Dogs don't necessarily have cleaner mouths.** Despite the popular belief that a dog's mouth is cleaner than a human's, dogs' mouths are actually full of bacteria. In fact, by their third birthday, 80 percent of dogs suffer from gum disease. Like their owners, dogs need regular preventive dental care to maintain healthy mouths.
2. **Goldfish have teeth.** Their teeth are very flat, like our molar teeth – and just like our molars, they're used to crush and grind food. Goldfish lose and re-grow teeth throughout their lives.
3. **Cats have fewer teeth than we do.** Cats have just 30 teeth (compared with humans' 32). Like ours, their teeth perform specific functions – including grasping, tearing and crushing food.
4. **A rabbit's teeth never stop growing.** Though wild rabbits have plenty of things to gnaw on to help keep their growing teeth in check, pet bunnies rely on wooden toys and timothy hay. If rabbits' teeth get too long, they may find it too painful to eat, affecting overall health.
5. **A horse has more teeth than brain matter.** The typical adult horse has 36 to 40 permanent teeth that are each about four inches long. Since the average horse brain weighs just under two pounds, their teeth occupy more space than their brains do!

Your pet's oral health plays a vital role in their overall health, just as yours does. Talk to your veterinarian about how you can keep Sparky's mouth healthy. And while you're at it, take the time to schedule your next visit to the dentist as well.