

Benefits Spotlight

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How to Cut Your Cavity Risk While Exercising

Whether you have your sights set on marathon training or simply hope to take the stairs more often, physical activity is excellent for just about every aspect of your health. But did you know that some exercise habits put you at greater risk of cavities and tooth erosion?

If wellness is part of your 2018 goals, don't skip your spin class for the sake of your oral health. Stick to your exercise plan and stay in your dentist's good graces by avoiding these two top causes of exercise-induced tooth problems.

RISK #1: Training Diet

The high amount of carbohydrates athletes consume, including sports drinks, gels and bars, boosts your cavity risk. Because all carbs break down into sugars, energy products can be just as harmful to teeth as eating candies and cookies. Eating a high-carb training diet can lower your mouth's pH level, which can cause teeth to begin to dissolve or demineralize.

THE SOLUTION: Drink Plain Water, Then Floss and Brush

If you consume energy products or acidic items during or immediately after a workout, make sure you also drink water. Not only will water keep you hydrated, swishing it around your mouth will dilute the potentially harmful effects from the acid and sugar in the energy products. Wait at least 30 minutes after consuming these products, then floss and brush with fluoride toothpaste to help remineralize tooth enamel.

RISK #2: Heavy Breathing

During an intense workout, you exert a lot of energy and may breathe through your mouth to take in more air. Heavy breathing tends to dry out your mouth and make you dehydrated, which lowers saliva production.

THE SOLUTION: Keep Yourself Hydrated

Keep your mouth as moist as possible with plenty of water before, during and after intense workouts. Dry mouth alone can be an issue, but when combined with the sugar and acid from your training products, it adds up to potential problems for your teeth.

Being more physically active in the year ahead can improve virtually every aspect of your life, but don't forget that oral health is part of total health. Like any wellness goal, small steps lead to great change—and these simple tips can play a big role in ensuring your teeth stay as strong as you are.

4 Valentine's Day Ideas to Make Your Sweetie Smile

Valentine's Day is a sweet holiday, but that doesn't mean it needs to be coated in sugar or derail your wellness goals. This is a day to share love—and you can do that without a box of candy hearts. Shake things up in 2018 by celebrating in a fun and healthy way with these four dentist-approved ideas.

1. *Create playful classroom treats.*

You don't have to send candy valentines for your kids' classroom exchanges. Small, inexpensive toys, such as bouncy balls, stickers, bubbles, glow sticks or crayons, are fun options for your kids to share with classmates.

2. *Get sentimental with your sweetie.*

Your valentine might enjoy some short-term satisfaction from a heart-shaped box of chocolates, but a personal gift leaves a lasting impression. Cook a meal together, hand write a love note or frame a favorite photo to mark the occasion.



3. *Get pun-ny with your honey.*

Don't underestimate the power an unexpected note in a lunch bag. And if you really want to get your loved one smiling, use some tooth-friendly snacks for witty inspiration. A few ideas to try: "Let's stick together" on carrot sticks, "You're the apple of my eye" with an apple and "I'm nuts for you" with a handful of almonds.

4. *Choose a better chocolate.*

If cutting candy on Valentine's Day is not an option, choose chocolate. Chocolate is rinsed from teeth easier than sticky sweets, like gummy candies. However, not all chocolate is created equal. Avoid milk chocolate and filled chocolates that contain caramel, toffee, heavy syrups and crunchy pieces. Solid dark chocolate contains the least amount of sugar, so it is the best option for your valentine's smile.