

# Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

## How Diet Affects the Health of Your Smile

When looking to make a new lifestyle change, going on a diet ranks high on the list. Your new eating regimen may whittle your waistline, but it can cause unwanted dental problems. So before you change your eating habits, learn how some popular diets can affect your smile.

### Low Calorie

Cutting calories is one of the most popular ways to lose weight. While this can be quite effective, it's important that dieters don't cut too many calories. Reducing the amount of food eaten can impact the amount of vitamins and minerals your body receives. Besides being all-around unhealthy, malnutrition can weaken your jawbone and other bones, soften your enamel and harm your gums. The crunch when you chew fresh vegetables – a good low-calorie food – can help maintain the strength of your teeth and jaw.

### Low Fat

While going on a low fat diet seems like an ideal way to shed some pounds, it might actually do more harm than good. Low-fat diets can disrupt your body's ability to absorb fat-soluble vitamins, such as A, D, E and K. Vitamin D is a critical one – it helps your body absorb calcium. If you can't properly absorb calcium, your teeth and bones may weaken. Plus, many low-fat dairy foods contain more sugar than their whole-fat counterparts. Additionally, fat helps your brain produce dopamine, a chemical that improves your mood. Diets low in omega-3 fatty acids can cause stress and anxiety. Stress can lead to tooth grinding (bruxism).

### Low Carb

If you've been adhering to a low-carb diet, you may notice that your breath is a bit on the stinky side. There's a reason for that. As your body starts to burn fat instead of carbohydrates for fuel, it releases chemicals called ketones. High ketone levels often cause bad breath, known as halitosis. Fortunately, mouthwash may mask it. Drinking more water, chewing on fresh parsley or sugarless gum and sucking on sugarless mints may also help. Otherwise, there's little you can do to combat ketone-related bad breath. A less extreme low-carb diet, one that doesn't kick your body into ketosis, is a better bet for your health and your breath.

Whatever your preferred weight loss method, it's important to make sure you partner with your physician to maintain your overall health. Mentioning a diet change to your dentist is

also a good idea. They'll be able to help you address some of the associated oral health issues.

### **Readers Ask - Coffee or Tea**

Teeth stains. There's a variety of vices out there looking to make their mark on your mouth, but we immediately think of coffee and tea as the culprits. Does one drink do less damage to your pearly whites than the other? Let's look at what we know.

Tooth blemishing as the result of drinking coffee or tea is due to the dark color and acid content in each. Steady consumption of either beverage will erode enamel while also clinging to plaque deposits, thus setting the stains over time.

Depending on if you take your drinks hot or on ice, temperature can also play a role in discoloration. Hot drinks tend to discolor enamel over time because the constant temperature change causes teeth to expand and contract slightly. This allows dark stains to penetrate tiny lines and micro-cracks in the enamel.

Some teas, mainly black ones, can actually stain teeth worse than coffee because of their higher tannin content. Tannins are a naturally occurring substance found in plants like tea leaves or fruit skins. Also present in wine, tannins contribute to that textural dry element. The danger in them is their ability to accelerate the dye color in connection to the enamel.

While cutting out these beloved beverages may be asking too much, there are a few hacks to reduce their pigmentary impact. Using a straw will help re-route the liquids around your teeth. Opting for lighter teas like white or green will draw less attention in the long run. Even rinsing your mouth after you finish will help prevent staining.

If you're concerned about the color of your teeth, talk with a dental professional. It is possible for your dentist or hygienist to remove these types of marks during a professional cleaning.