

# VitaMin



Vital health information in a minute

## EAT SMART FOR HEALTHY TEETH AND GUMS

It's no secret that sugary treats are bad for your teeth. But you may be surprised by how much your food and beverage choices can affect your oral health. Here's a rundown of the best and worst foods for your teeth and gums.

### 1. Stay away from tooth decay

Bacteria in your mouth can change sugar and carbohydrates into acids that harm your teeth. Avoid foods that invite tooth decay and dental problems:

- **Sticky foods:** Candy, sweets and other sticky foods linger on tooth surfaces and can lead to tooth decay.
- **Starchy foods:** Starchy foods such as pretzels and potato chips can get stuck between your teeth.
- **Carbonated and sweetened beverages:** Soda and juices are loaded with sugar. Plus, the phosphoric and citric acids in carbonated beverages can wear away tooth enamel.

### 2. Make your mouth happy

Certain foods may help protect enamel and restore minerals that were removed by acids. Protect your teeth and gums with these healthy foods:

- **Calcium-rich foods.** Calcium is a key nutrient for healthy teeth and bones. Fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, plain yogurt, fortified soy beverages, almonds and dark green leafy vegetables are all good sources of calcium.
- **High-fiber foods.** Foods high in fiber often have a high water content. Firm, crunchy fruits and vegetables (apples, pears, carrots and celery) are good choices. This helps get saliva flowing, which is good for your teeth. Saliva works to defend against cavities by reducing the effects of acids and enzymes in your mouth.
- **Unsweetened tea.** Drinking green or black tea may help hold off bacteria so your teeth stay strong.

Start a new healthy habit today to help improve your oral health. It can be as simple as limiting snacking between meals or drinking water or tea instead of sweetened beverages.