

ORAL HEALTH TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season is full of festive foods, events and sweets. With busy schedules, increased stress levels and change in routine, basic oral health habits can be neglected. To maintain healthy oral hygiene and avoid unwanted dental problems, consider following these oral health tips, especially throughout the holiday season.



1. Eat sugary food in moderation

Sugars found in festive foods and sweets increase the likelihood of developing tooth decay. Eat sugary food in moderation over the holiday season.

2. Limit acidic drinks

Acidic drinks can cause the enamel to erode or dissolve. These drinks include sparkling and still wines, beers, spirits, soft drinks, energy drinks, juice, sweetened ice teas ... and more. Avoid brushing for at least 30 minutes after consuming acidic drinks.

3. Avoid snacking on sweets

Frequent snacking on sweets increases the risk of tooth decay. Eat sweet treats with a meal or shortly after. The increased amount of saliva produced during meal times can help wash away food particles and acids built up by bacteria.

4. Avoid sticky and hard sweets

Sticky sweets and hard-boiled sweets tend to remain in the mouth longer, increasing the risk of tooth decay. Sticky sweets can get stuck to your teeth and dislodge fillings. Hard sweets can fracture weak teeth. To avoid unwanted dental problems, limit these sticky and hard sweets.

5. Rinse your mouth with water or chew sugar-free gum after meals

After meals, sugar and food particles can be found around your teeth. Rinse your mouth with water after meals, snacks and acidic drinks – this will increase saliva flow and rinse away sugars and acids in your mouth.

6. Use scissors and nut crackers, not teeth

Use scissors to open parcels, packets and presents. Use nut crackers for nuts with hard shells – **not teeth** – to avoid fracturing teeth.

7. Keep to your daily dental routine

The holiday season can disrupt your schedule with events, travel and late nights. However, you should still brush twice a day and clean between teeth by flossing (small gaps) or with interdental brushes (big gaps) once a day.

8. Avoid stressful situations and manage teeth grinding

The holiday season is a busy time with long to-do lists and friends and families to visit. Stress can cause some people to bite their nails or grind their teeth, possibly causing teeth to wear down or fracture. Try to avoid stressful situations, and if you think you grind your teeth, speak to your dentist about how you can protect them.

9. See your dentist for that niggling problem

If you have a niggling dental problem that comes and goes, see your dentist before the holiday season to have it treated. This will avoid the problem flaring up while you are busy or away, or your dental clinic has closed for the holiday period.

10. Keep your dental appointment

If you have dental treatment scheduled before the holiday period, try to keep the appointment so that any issues can be treated, avoiding bigger problems.

11. Don't forget to pack your toothbrush and pain relief

If you are going away for the holiday period, remember to pack your toothbrush and floss or interdental brush. Pack over-the-counter pain relief with your toiletries to manage dental pain that might come up when you travel. It is not recommended to do any DIY dental treatment if you cannot access a dentist quickly, as it may worsen a problem.

12. Where is your emergency dental care?

Know your dentist's opening times during the holiday period. If your dentist is not open, or you are going away, find out where you can seek emergency dental care in your area. The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne (03 9341 1000) is open on weekends and public holidays.

