

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

National Fruit and Vegetable Month, celebrated in September, is a great time to focus on eating healthy for your smile. There are certain fruits and veggies that can actually improve the health of your teeth, but it's also important to get other nutrients for whole mouth health.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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Can a Vegetarian Diet Affect Your Oral Health?



Whether for health or ethical reasons, many people opt to be vegetarian or vegan. However, meat is a good source of many essential vitamins and minerals. Without them, vegetarians may have a higher risk for oral health problems, including gum disease. ¹ Luckily, there are other ways to get those nutrients to ensure that your smile stays healthy.

Dairy is well known as a great source of calcium, a mineral that makes teeth and bones strong. Milk, cheese and calcium-fortified cereal all contain the bone-building mineral. While vegetarians usually eat eggs and dairy, vegans avoid all animal products. Fortunately, some of the best sources of calcium are completely vegetarian- and vegan-friendly, like dark leafy greens, broccoli and tofu. ²

Your body needs vitamin D to process calcium, so low levels may have an effect on gum disease and tooth loss. Vegetarians can get a daily dose by eating cooked egg yolks or drinking fortified milk. Vegans and vegetarians alike can look for other foods with vitamin D, such as mushrooms and fortified cereal. Spending time outside can also help your body produce the vitamin naturally.

If you're worried you're lacking calcium and vitamin D, you may want to consider supplements. Discuss your diet and nutritional needs with your dentist or physician. ³

4 Tricks to Perk up Picky Palates



Many young children go through a stage where they become extremely choosy about what they eat. Though it's a normal phase, parents of picky eaters may be concerned about whether their kids are getting enough nutrients. If your child refuses to eat anything green or seems to be eating nothing but mac and cheese, never fear – try these tricks to broaden his or her mealtime horizons.

1. Don't let kids drink juice or other sugary drinks throughout the day. ⁴

By filling up on non-nutritive liquids, they won't have room for the balanced dinner you planned. ⁵ Instead, make sure your child drinks plenty of water throughout the day.

2. Make mealtime fun!

Serve brightly colored foods and use cookie cutters to create awesome, kid-friendly shapes. ⁶ After all, eating is more fun when your veggies are shaped like hearts, stars and flowers.

3. Let your child get involved in the decision-making process.

Ask for help picking out healthy foods from the grocery store and encourage your child to assist with dinner preparation. Kids can rinse veggies and mix ingredients. ⁷

4. Don't offer dessert as a reward.

That implies that dessert is the best part of the meal, ⁸ which may just increase your picky child's desire for sweet treats. Instead, you can redefine dessert to mean fruit or yogurt – or skip dessert altogether.

With these helpful hints, your picky child should be saying “yes” (or at least, maybe) to fun, healthy options in no time. And it might make dinnertime more enjoyable for you, too!

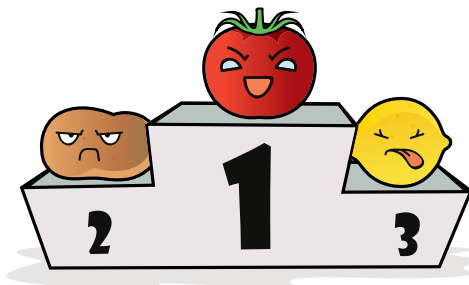
SMILE STATS



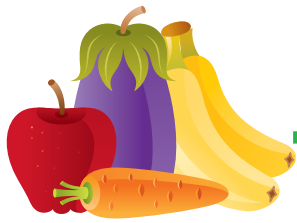
According to one study, introverts produce 50% more saliva than extroverts. ⁹



Fruits and vegetables should cover half of your plate at mealtime. ¹⁰



In the United States, more tomatoes are consumed than any other single fruit or vegetable. ¹¹



Fruits and Veggies That Make Smiles Shine



Getting plenty of fruits and vegetables is essential to keeping your body healthy, and your smile is no exception. The fiber in fruits and vegetables stimulates saliva, which keeps the mouth moist and makes it difficult for harmful bacteria to grow.¹² Fruits and veggies also provide vitamins and minerals such as calcium, iron and vitamin C.¹³ Respectively, they help strengthen enamel, promote tongue health and contribute to healthy gums.

In honor of National Fruit and Veggie Month, try eating these foods, which are packed with the vitamins and minerals your teeth love:

- **Peppers** – from sweet green bells to spicy jalapenos – are rich sources of vitamin C,¹⁴ a nutrient that helps your bones and teeth heal and fight off infections.¹⁵
- **Strawberries** are high in vitamin C. In fact, if you compare ounce for ounce, strawberries are a better source of vitamin C than oranges.¹⁶ It only takes about five large strawberries to meet 98 percent of your daily vitamin C requirement.
- **Broccoli** is a great non-dairy source of calcium. If you're lactose intolerant, load up on broccoli and other dark green veggies.¹⁷
- **Carrots, pumpkin and sweet potato**¹⁸ are all high in vitamin A, which is critical for healthy tooth enamel.¹⁹
- **Green leafy vegetables and peas** are all options rich in iron.²⁰ Additionally, **spinach** is a great source of folic acid, which helps strengthen gums and soft tissues in your mouth.²¹

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: GUACAMOLE CHICKEN LETTUCE WRAPS

Ingredients:



2 tablespoons lime juice



½ teaspoon salt



1 ripe avocado, peeled



4 lettuce leaves



½ cup chopped tomato



2 cups shredded chicken

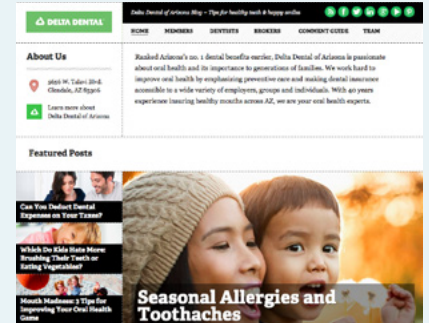
Directions:

Mix the lime juice, salt and avocado together until smooth. Fold in the chopped tomato. Spread ¼ cup of the avocado mixture onto each lettuce leaf. Top with ½ cup shredded chicken. Enjoy immediately or chill until ready.

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