

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

In honor of Good Nutrition Month, we discuss nutrients that encourage gum health and mouth-friendly foods for Thanksgiving.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

NOVEMBER 2018

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Give Thanks for a Healthy Smile with a Trip to the Dentist!



When was the last time you paid your dentist a visit? If you are like many Americans, chances are it was quite some time ago. Lack of money or quality dental insurance, busy schedules, fear and the belief that oral health is an unnecessary factor in overall body health are some of the top reasons why people neglect visiting the dentist. However, there are many reasons why your twice-yearly check-ups are so important—not only for your oral health but for your overall health as well.

You may practice perfect oral hygiene and your teeth may feel fine but regular dental check-ups aren't about addressing problems, they are about prevention. There is still a chance food particles or other debris can get lodged between your teeth. There are also many foods and beverages that can wear down tooth enamel making them vulnerable to decay.

The majority of dental problems do not become visible or painful until they are highly advanced. And, unfortunately, serious oral issues are generally irreparable, not to mention painful and expensive to treat. A deep cleaning by a dentist twice a year is the best way to hit all the spots you may have missed with brushing and flossing and prevent any problems that may have gone unseen.

Need to find a Delta Dental dentist near you? Just visit deltadentalaz.com/find. For added convenience, you can also schedule appointments with some network dentists using the Delta Dental Mobile App!

A full Thanksgiving menu of mouth-friendly nutrients



Nutritious foods show up in abundance during November's festivities. If you're searching for nutrients that'll help your smile, learn where they might be hiding in your Thanksgiving meal.

Main dishes

Turkey is rich in protein, which means it contains high amounts of phosphorus.¹ Phosphorus is important for strengthening bones and teeth as well as mineralizing them to protect against cavities.² Just make sure to keep floss handy in case turkey gets stuck between your teeth.

If you opt for ham, your mouth will still be happy. Eating just three ounces of ham provides 15 percent of your recommended daily zinc,³ helping replenish tissue along the gum line.⁴ Watch out for the sticky, sugary residue glazed ham can leave behind. If you do eat ham with a sugar glaze, brush your teeth or drink water afterward.

Side dishes

The green beans in green bean casserole are a great source of vitamins A, C and K.⁵ Vitamins A and C are good for gum health,⁶ while vitamin K helps protect against substances that break down bones.⁷ Avoid cavities by ditching the starchy fried onions on top and choosing a recipe with toasted almonds instead.

Yams contain vitamins A and C, too.⁶ Unfortunately, if they're prepared in a sweet, sticky sauce, they leave cavity-causing sugars in your mouth. After enjoying candied yams, drink water to wash it away.

Desserts

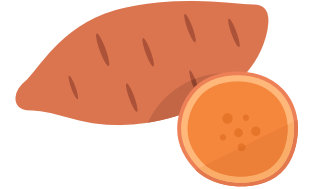
There's nothing like a freshly-made pumpkin pie, and you might be surprised to learn that this pie variety isn't all bad for oral health. While pie typically has high amounts of sugar, the pumpkin in this one provides a healthy dose of vitamin A⁶ to help strengthen enamel and encourage gum health. Plus, pumpkin pie doesn't require added sugars and can be made with spices because pumpkin already contains a naturally sweet flavor.

Be careful about the crust, though, as it often contains starches that contribute to tooth decay. To keep your pumpkin pie mouth-friendly, make a nut crumble crust and replace white flour with nut flour.⁸

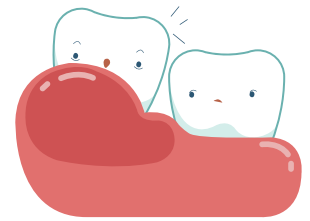
Or, for a sugar-free pumpkin pie alternative, try our pumpkin pudding recipe.

Drink plenty of water throughout the meal to help wash away any residue that gets stuck on your teeth. And after a day of enjoying Thanksgiving food, be sure to clean your mouth thoroughly by flossing and brushing with fluoride toothpaste.

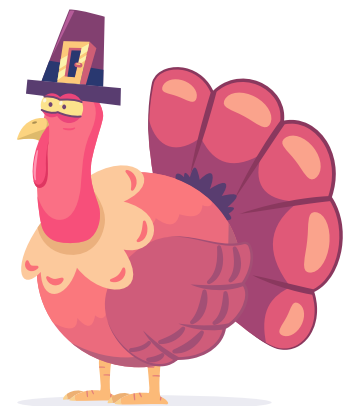
SMILE STATS



The U.S. produced 3.1 billion pounds of sweet potatoes in 2015! Dig into your sweet potatoes this Thanksgiving for tons of mouth-friendly nutrients.⁹



Roughly 80 percent of American adults have some form of gum disease. In addition to dental visits and good oral hygiene, the foods and drinks you consume can help.¹⁰



The fastest turkey carving took 3 minutes and 19.47 seconds. You might not carve yours that fast, but you'll still enjoy the oral health benefits from the protein and phosphorus turkey contains.¹¹



EATING AND DRINKING TO PROMOTE HEALTHY GUMS



Nutrition is vital for your entire body, even when it comes to your gums. In honor of Good Nutrition Month, take a moment this November to learn which nutrients help prevent periodontal (gum) disease.

To get the full picture, it's good to know why periodontal disease occurs. When plaque and tartar stay on teeth for an extended period, the bacteria can inflame gums, resulting in gingivitis. Symptoms of gingivitis include red, swollen, tender or bleeding gums.¹² When gingivitis isn't treated, it can advance to periodontitis (gum disease), meaning "inflammation around the tooth." Pockets or spaces form as gums pull away from teeth and then become infected. This can cause damage to structures that support teeth and can eventually lead to tooth loss.

More immediate symptoms include persistent bad breath, tender or bleeding gums, pain while chewing, tooth sensitivity and even loose teeth. Depending on the severity, treatments range from deep cleanings that remove plaque and tartar to more involved dental surgeries.¹⁰





In addition to good oral health habits and regular dental visits, nutrition is an important factor for preventing or recovering from periodontitis. Without proper nutrients fueling your body's natural processes, you may not be able to fight off infections as easily. This can make you more vulnerable to quicker progression and harsher severity of periodontitis.¹³

Some of the nutrients that encourage gum health include vitamin C, vitamin B12, folic acid and calcium.¹⁴ These key nutrients are easily accessible on a daily basis. Check out some of the richest sources of each.

- **Vitamin C:**
Bell peppers, strawberries, broccoli, tomatoes, snow peas and kale¹⁵
- **Vitamin B12:**
Fish, beef, fortified cereals (watch out for the sugary kinds!), fortified tofu, low-fat milk, Swiss cheese and eggs¹⁶
- **Folic acid:**
Edamame, lentils, asparagus, spinach, avocados, mangoes and lettuce¹⁷
- **Calcium:**
Milk, yogurt, cheese, kale, broccoli and fortified cereals (we recommend whole-grain varieties)¹⁸

Always make sure to brush for two minutes twice a day and floss once a day. It's also best to avoid or quit smoking, which is one of the most significant causes of periodontitis and can decrease your chances for successful treatment.¹⁰

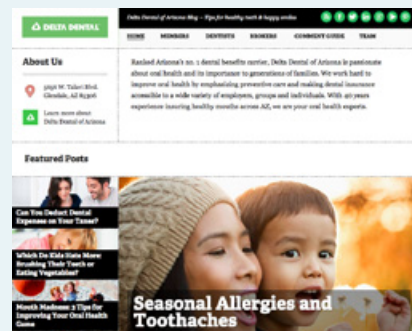
MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: QUICK PUMPKIN PUDDING

Ingredients:		Directions:
		Beat pudding mix and evaporated milk in a large bowl according to package directions.
1 package (5.1 ounces) of sugar-free vanilla instant pudding and pie filling mix	12 ounces evaporated low-fat 2% milk	Refrigerate mixture for 5 minutes. Add pumpkin and pumpkin pie spice and mix well. Spoon into dessert dishes. Refrigerate for 10 minutes or until ready to serve. For a little extra goodness, top with sugar-free whipped cream. Enjoy!
		
1 can (15 ounces) of 100% pure pumpkin	1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice	

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deltadentalazblog.com



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SOURCES

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