



BEAT THE SWEETS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Give yourself the gift of a healthy smile.

From Halloween through New Year's Eve, the sweets and treats are practically everywhere we turn. And too many can be harmful to your teeth.

Here are some tips to help preserve your healthy smile through a combination of a balanced diet and proper oral hygiene.

- ▶ **Limit sugar and starch.** Plaque is the sticky white film that forms on your teeth. Plaque is made up of millions of bacteria. Sugary and starchy foods cause the bacteria to produce acids that break down tooth enamel and may eventually cause tooth decay. To neutralize these acids, try eating a bit of Cheddar, Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese, which stimulate saliva production.
- ▶ **Use fluoride toothpaste.** Brush for three minutes at least twice a day, and always at bedtime. During sleep, your mouth produces less saliva to dilute bacterial acid. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and change it every three to four months – earlier if it is frayed.
- ▶ **Floss your teeth daily.** A toothbrush cannot clean between the teeth, so be sure to floss at least once every day.
- ▶ **Reduce snack attacks.** With tantalizing leftovers in the refrigerator, willpower is key. If you must snack, eat fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain products. Avoid hard candy, mints and sticky sweets that stay in your mouth for a long time. Sticky sweets may damage fillings, caps or bridgework. Be sure to drink plenty of water after treats to dilute the acid attack.
- ▶ **Visit your dentist regularly.** Regular visits for professional cleanings will reduce damaging tartar buildup. Start off the New Year by visiting your dentist. Identifying small problems early can prevent cavities and gum disease. Your dentist will also be able to check to make sure you are brushing and flossing properly. Treat your sweet tooth wisely.



“Although we’re all busy during the holidays, take a few minutes to remember the fundamentals of a winning smile. And beware of those tempting holiday foods. All the brushing, flossing and preventive visits to the dentist can’t reverse the effects of a sugar-rich or starch-based diet.”

— Dr. Michael Hahn,
National Dental Director for Cigna

Together, all the way.®



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