SEVEN BAD HABITS THAT HURT YOUR TEETH

Want a healthier smile? You'll need to start with healthier habits. Sure, brushing and flossing every day is the right way to start. But, like many of us, could you be hurting your teeth with what you drink, what you eat and in how you care for them? Here are some of the everyday things you may be doing—and can change—for better oral health.

1. Eating too much sugar
   Candy and cavities can go hand in hand. But so do sweet drinks like soda, tea and sports drinks. The volume of sugar flowing into your mouth encourages more plaque to form. Plaque destroys teeth. And sugar can lead to gum disease. **How to change it:** Eat more whole foods without added sugar, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains like cereal and oats, and lean protein, such as beans, nuts, fish and poultry.

2. Consuming acidic foods
   While acidic foods and juices like those from grapefruit, oranges, lemons and limes may be part of a healthy diet, too much can break down tooth enamel. So can acid in regular and diet sodas. **How to change it:** Use a straw when drinking acidic beverages. You can also swallow more quickly. Sippers are more likely to damage their teeth than people who drink quickly.

3. Staining with food and drinks

Sink your teeth into this.
If you have dental insurance or are on the state dental plan, take advantage of your benefits. For more information about the state dental plan, check out the Dental Benefit page.

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dull your smile. Luckily, it’s only a cosmetic issue and can be fixed. **How to change it:** Use tooth whitening products to remove stains. Also, talk to your dentist about other brightening methods.

4. **Whitening too often**
   Yes, we know we just said that whitening can help fix stained teeth. But overdoing it on the whitening products can harm tooth enamel, too. **How to change it:** If you use brightening products from your dentist, which have higher peroxide levels, use them only as long as directed. Use over-the-counter products as needed and as directed for a safer, healthier smile.

5. **Grinding your teeth**
   Clenching and grinding your teeth when you’re stressed or during sleep can wear them down and cause fractures. When a tooth is damaged like this, it usually needs to be replaced with an implant. **How to change it:** Talk to your dentist about a night guard you wear to bed to stop further damage.

6. **Scrubbing**
   How hard you brush your teeth is as important as how often you brush them. Scrubbing damages gums and tooth enamel. **How to change it:** Start by using a soft bristled brush. Hold your toothbrush using two fingers and a thumb instead of gripping it in your fist. It helps control the amount of pressure on your teeth as you clean. Watch and learn proper brushing and flossing techniques to keep a healthy mouth and body.

7. **Crunching and biting**
   Chomping down on ice, hard candy or a pen/pencil can fracture your teeth. So can using your teeth to open things like bottle tops and other items with a tight seal. **How to change it:** Use your teeth only to chew food.
References:
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