

Nutrition for Dental Health

The health of the oral cavity—teeth (bones), gums (collagen-based tissue) and lining (mucous membranes)—is a microcosm that reflects overall health. If our bones are not healthy, our teeth will suffer, if we are nutrient deficient, our gums and mucosa will suffer. Even the health of our immune system is reflected in the state of our gums. We are constantly bombarded by bacteria in our mouths. If our immune and anti-oxidant systems are not up to the task, we will get gum disease or periodontal disease.

Periodontal Disease is associated with a 25% increase in risk factor for heart disease. Tooth loss is associated with osteoporosis. Our mouths can serve as warning systems that everything is not functioning as it should. Also, basic good health practices support oral health.

The Basics

A whole foods, nutrient dense diet provides the underlying strength every person needs to be happy and healthy. Why? Because whole foods provide an abundance of nutrients and energy that processed, packaged and refined foods, such as white sugar, white rice, white flour, packaged crackers and cereals simply cannot. To make white flour, for instance, the germ and the hull are removed from the whole grain wheat, which eliminates most of the vitamins and minerals. What you have left is a source of carbohydrates without the nutrients that help with digestion and other functions of the body. Even though you get a certain number of calories from eating products made with white flour, they end up depleting the body of needed nutrients.

A whole foods diet includes whole grains, fruits and vegetables, healthy fats and proteins. Studies have linked high intakes of fruits and vegetables with greater oral health as well as lower levels of oral cancer. Below you will find a list of good whole foods to try:

Whole Grains:

Brown rice—try brown basmati or brown jasmine for a quicker cooking tastier rice

Wheat berries

Buckwheat

Oats

Rye

Millet

Quinoa

Spelt

NO REFINED SUGAR WHITE FLOUR OR WHITE RICE

Healthy Proteins:

Free range Turkey

Free Range and Organic Chicken

Grass-Fed Beef

Fish

Nuts and Seeds

Beans and Tofu

Healthy fats:

Nuts and Seeds

Flax Oil

Olive Oil

Organic Butter and Dairy Products

Organic Coconut Butter

NO HYDROGENATED FATS NO TRANS FATS NO COOKED CORN, SUNFLOWER OR SAFFLOWER OILS

Fresh Fruits and Vegetables:

9 Servings of fruits and vegetables per day

1 Serving of cooked veggies= ½ cup

1 Serving raw veggies= 1 cup

1 serving of fruit= 1 piece of whole fruit or ½ cup of berries

Go for a variety of cooked and raw, crunchy and leafy veggies every day

Opt for whole fruit over juices for the extra fiber content

Organic is best: organic foods have more nutrients and they taste better

Extra Help

If you already have gingivitis, periodontal disease, cavities or tooth loss, you can give yourself some extra help with additional nutrients. While gum disease is considered an infectious disease, i.e. caused by pathogenic organisms (germs), the health of the host –that’s you- has equal footing in preventing or

precipitating the disease. Because of that, giving a person extra nutrients equals strength in the fight against gum disease.

Nutrients that relate directly to tooth and gum health:

Therapeutic doses are given as information only and may vary from person to person. If you feel that you would like to try the therapeutic doses, please work with a qualified health care practitioner such as a nutritionist, chiropractor, acupuncturist, naturopathic physician or holistic MD.

Vitamin A: This anti-oxidant vitamin is necessary for collagen synthesis and immune system strength. Some experts recommend taking high doses of Beta-Carotene, a vitamin A precursor, because of its high anti-oxidant content.

Maintenance Dose: 50,000iu/day

Therapeutic Dose: 250,000iu/day

Vitamin C: This vitamin serves multiple roles in oral health. It is anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory, supports the immune system and supports the formation of collagen. Collagen is the main tissue making up your gums. In addition, vitamin C is a co-factor in calcium absorption.

Maintenance Dose: 500-1000mg/day

Therapeutic Dose: 3-5-g/day in divided doses

Vitamin D: This vitamin is vital for the absorption of calcium in maintaining healthy bone.

Dose: Go outside and get 20-30 minutes of sunshine each day without sunblock, preferably before 10 am or after 4 pm.

Vitamin E: This anti oxidant vitamin works synergistically with vitamin C and Selenium to quench free radicals. In addition, it supports healthy inflammatory processes.

Dose: 400-800 iu/day

Vitamin K: This fat-soluble vitamin supports healthy blood clotting and calcium absorption. Great for tooth and bone health.

Dose; Eat lots of green leafy vegetables. Also, take 1 mg supplemental vitamin K per day.

Folic Acid: This B vitamin is essential for gum health. It binds to toxins that are created by plaque. Folate is especially important for pregnant women and users of oral contraceptives due to high demand for this nutrient in these two groups. Supplemental folic acid has been shown to prevent neural tube birth defects. The gums seem to suffer from the same kind of end-organ folate deficiency that can cause cervical dysplasia. It's wise to take vitamin B12 when you are taking folate because high folic acid can mask a B12 deficiency.

Dose: 400-800mcg/day

Therapeutic Dose: 2 mg/day in divided doses orally

Rinse with 15ml. of a 1% folate solution twice a day.

Calcium; Calcium is well known as a building block for bones, and therefore teeth. In addition, it contributes to the health of connective tissue throughout your body.

Dose: 1000 mg/day calcium carbonate is difficult to absorb. A krebs cycle chelate is better, such as calcium citrate, malate, lysinate and/or aspartate. Good sources of calcium are almonds, green leafy vegetables, sesame seeds, sardines, canned fish, sheep goat and cow milk.

Magnesium: Much less widely celebrated than calcium, magnesium actually plays a role in a vast number of functions throughout the body. Most importantly for oral health, it is one of calcium's partners in absorption: without magnesium, calcium cannot do its job. In addition, it is important in muscle and nerve function, specifically for relaxation and therefore supports a healthy heart function. Since gum disease is associated with an increased risk of heart disease, you should do everything you can to support your heart.

Dose: 6 mg/2.2lbs. of body weight. If you take too much Mg, you will get diarrhea. If this happens, cut back on your dose.

Magnesium is found in lots of green, leafy vegetables as well as nuts and seeds.

Selenium: Se is an antioxidant mineral that works in concert with vitamin E. It is a building block for detoxifying enzymes in the liver.

Dose: 200-400 mcg/day

Zinc: Zinc is part of hundreds of enzymatic reactions in your body. It is "antagonistic" to copper, meaning that if you have too much zinc, you will crowd out copper and vice versa. There is an association with high copper in the gums and gum disease. In addition, zinc accelerates wound healing and strengthens the immune system. Zinc deficiency is widespread in the US.

Dose: 30 mg/day zinc picolinate or 60 mg of another form

Rinse with a 5% solution of zinc twice a day.

Zinc is found in oysters, rocky mountain oysters and nuts and seeds.

Quercetin: This bioflavonoid is a partner to vitamin C. It has anti-inflammatory properties as well as being a powerful antioxidant. It reduces allergic reactions and supports healthy collagen and connective tissue.

Dose: 500mg, 3x a day

Quercetin is abundant in onions and garlic, and is found in most fruits and vegetables that contain vitamin C.

Co-Enzyme Q10: This co-enzyme is also called ubiquinone, which come from the same root word “ubiquitous,” meaning everywhere. It plays a role in energy production in all cells. It is a powerful anti-oxidant and a key player in heart health. It had been shown to improve gum health.

Dose: 300mg/day for acute situations and heart problems

Brushing with a toothpaste containing CoQ10 may have some benefit

Reducing Inflammation: Inflammation is a factor in gum disease. The gums become inflamed due to infection, which leads to more pain and infection.

Essential Fatty Acids: Fats provide the building blocks for prostaglandins, which can prevent or increase inflammation. Omega-3 fatty acids such as those found in salmon, tuna and other cold water fish as well as in flax seeds, reduce inflammation, as does Gamma-Linoleic Acid found in evening primrose, borage and black current seeds oils. Omega-6 fatty acids such as those found in corn, safflower and sunflower oils and in abundance in non-organic poultry and dairy products have the potential to increase inflammation.

Omega-3's: 3-6- gms per day. Eat cold water fish. Take 1 t/day of flax seed oil, or put it in your salad dressing.

GLA : 3mgs/day. Take borage, black current or evening primrose oil.

Zinc, B6 and Mg support positive processing pathways for fatty acids.

Take 100 mg/day of vitamin B6

Quercetin

Bromelain: This is a protein digesting enzyme from pineapple. By taking it between meals, you allow the enzyme to digest straying inflammation-causing proteins.

Vitamin C : see above

Curcumin (Turmeric) and Ginger: These two ayurvedic herbs are powerful anti-inflammatories. You can eat them in your food, drink ginger tea with 60 drops turmeric tincture in it, or take 400 mg of curcumin 2-3 times a day with some ginger tea.

Immune Support: Since gum disease involves microbes, it makes sense to give the immune system the strength to fight them off.

Astragalus: This Chinese herb is a potent immune tonic. It has an overall supportive and regulating effect on the immune system You can put the roots in soup.

Shiitake Mushroom and Reishi Mushroom: These mushrooms offer strong immune support. Take in a capsule or a tincture, or add them to your diet.

Support Collagen: It is extremely important to support healthy collagen formation since what is what your gums are made of. The following nutrients support collagen formation: Chondroitin Sulfate, Vitamin C, B6, a diet with adequate protein, vitamin A zinc and copper.

Support Mucous Membranes: Your mouth and digestive tract are made up of mucous membranes. L-glutamine is the main amino acid building block for the digestive tract. You can take 5-20gms/day.

Stress reduction: Living in the world today we can all stand to reduce our stress, but when we are facing a health challenge it becomes all the more important. When you are under stress, your adrenal glands produce cortisol, the stress hormone. In small amounts, it is beneficial, but when there is too much it creates damaging free radicals in the body. If you are sick or have inflammation or allergies, you already have too many of these free radicals in your system. Reducing stress in your life makes it easier to heal. You might try Chi Gung, yoga or meditation, or even just lying down for 15-30 minutes during the day can be beneficial. Any little break can help. Don't feel like you have to stop for hours at a time. Incorporate little bits of relaxation whenever you can.

Adaptogenic herbs like ginseng and ashwaganda support overall strength and well-being. Taking a 60 drop 3x/day of one of these herbs can increase energy and support healing.