

# A Season of Smiles

Avoid dental dangers during the holidays



From holiday shopping to wintertime weather, the end of the year can be intense. Make sure the festivities don't harm your teeth — know what oral health risks to look out for this time of year and what you can do to stay smiling.



## Dry Mouth

**The danger:** As temperatures drop, relative humidity levels indoors and outdoors can fall, leaving your skin, hair and mouth dry. To top it off, some holiday favorites high in salt or caffeine can make dehydration even worse. Not only does this problem cause bad breath, it also boosts your chance of cavities.

**The solution:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day, especially after coffee or alcohol. If you need to crank up the heat to get through winter, consider using a humidifier to keep a healthy level of moisture in the air.



## Jaw Pain

**The danger:** End-of-year stress can take a toll on your oral health. Clenching your teeth, a common symptom of stress, can lead to jaw problems.

**The solution:** Reduce the stressors in your life. Practice physical exercises to relax your head and shoulders, and consider squeezing a stress ball when the pressure piles on.





## Tooth Sensitivity

**The danger:** Chilly temperatures can get your teeth chattering. Sensitive teeth can get a shock when hit by a blast of cold air, and the cold can make your teeth contract.

**The solution:** Bundle up before braving the elements. Keep your mouth closed, and wrap a scarf around your mouth if necessary.



## Falling Behind on Brushing

**The danger:** It's easy to let your oral health habits fall by the wayside during the holidays. But slacking on brushing and flossing lets plaque build up, potentially leading to painful cavities and inflamed gums.

**The solution:** Keep a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss in your bag so you can brush and floss wherever you are. To maintain regular habits, set up a holiday brushing schedule. For emergencies, keep some xylitol gum or mints handy. A sugar substitute, xylitol contains cavity-fighting properties to protect your teeth.



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Visit [mysmileway.com](http://mysmileway.com) — a one-stop-shop for oral health-related tools and tips, including interactive quizzes, a risk assessment tool and a subscription to *Grin!*, our free oral wellness e-magazine.

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