

Tooth-Friendly Thanksgiving

How to celebrate a holiday even your dentist will appreciate



Is your healthy smile one of the things you're grateful for? This Thanksgiving, eat smart to keep your teeth and gums healthy.

Thanksgiving dinner dangers

Sugar

Whether it's pumpkin pie or a marshmallow-topped yam casserole, Thanksgiving dinner can be a delight for sweet teeth. But all that sugar also offers a feast for cavity causing bacteria.

What you can do: If you're cooking, consider swapping out sugar for substitutes like xylitol or erythritol. These sweeteners don't cause decay. If you're eating, limit your dessert portion and follow it with a glass of water.

Starch

Savory foods aren't as infamous for causing decay, but the starch in sides like cornbread and stuffing can feed the same acid-producing bacteria as sugar.

What you can do: Mix up your plate to balance out the starch with protein and fiber.

Enamel stains

Brightly colored foods and drinks look good on the dinner table, but they can leave your enamel looking dull. Watch out for red wine, cranberry sauce, coffee and even white wine. Certain pies, like cherry and blueberry, also pose a risk.

What you can do: Skip the wine — or book a cleaning with your dentist afterwards.

Acid wear

Acid and enamel don't mix. The acid in wine and cranberry juice can soften your enamel, leaving it more vulnerable to decay.

What you can do: Avoid acidic foods and drinks whenever possible. If you can't, lessen their impact with bites of other dishes and sips of water. Wait at least half an hour before brushing.



Cranberries: Friend or Foe?

Should cranberries be your new weapon in the fight against decay? It turns out the juice of these small red berries can interrupt the formation of plaque, according to research from the University of Rochester.¹ Before you load up on cranberry sauce, though, remember that this only applies to 100% cranberry juice — not the sweetened sauce that you eat your turkey with. Plus, cranberries stain your teeth, so you'd better not skip brushing that day.



Tips for a healthy holiday

- 1. Skip the snacking.** If you know it'll take a long time for the turkey to cook, prepare in advance by eating a larger breakfast or lunch than usual. Snacking in between meals is a recipe for decay.
- 2. Wash it down with water.** It's a win-win: You'll stay hydrated, and you'll slow down cavity-causing bacteria. Extra points if your water is fluoridated.
- 3. Brush and floss afterwards.** Keep a toothbrush handy so you can brush your teeth after dinner, even if you're off visiting family. Don't forget to take some toothpaste and floss!



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¹ Koo et al. Influence of cranberry juice on glucan-mediated processes involved in *Streptococcus mutans* biofilm development. *Caries Res.* 2006;40(1):20-7.