

Healthy People Dental

Healthy Mouths for the Holiday Season

No matter how much you love your dentist, he or she probably doesn't top the list of people you want to spend quality time with over the holidays. Follow these tips to steer clear of emergency trips to the dentist's office this season.

Don't crack nuts with your teeth.

Although protein found in nuts helps keep muscles and bones strong, you shouldn't test the strength of your teeth by shelling nuts with them. The hard surface of most nutshells can cause serious tooth and gum damage, and may even crack teeth. Your safest bet? Shell nuts before snacking on them.

Pass on chewy treats.

Holiday candy platters are often loaded with treats that can harm your teeth. Sticky substances cling to tooth enamel and encourage tooth decay, and thick candies like caramel and taffy can even yank out fillings. Eat these sweets sparingly and along with other foods to help keep the treats from sticking to your teeth.

Use proper tools to open packages and bottles.

We know you're excited to rip into that gift from your great aunt, but your teeth are not the right tools for the task. Gripping a package or stubborn bottle cap with your teeth can crack them, possibly requiring a root canal procedure and a crown for repair. Give your mouth a great gift – reach for scissors or a bottle opener instead.

Avoid chewing on hard candy or ice cubes.

Crunching on ice or hard candy can lead to cracked or chipped teeth, which are painful and pricey to treat. Whether you're enjoying a sweet or finishing the ice in your holiday cocktail, let it dissolve naturally in your mouth. Chewing on hard objects puts too much stress on teeth.

Say "no" to nail biting.

It's no secret that the holidays can be stressful, but biting your nails won't bring relief. Anxious nibbling is bad for both fingernails and teeth. Experts have linked the habit to teeth grinding, clenching, jaw problems, facial pain and sensitive teeth. If you get the urge to chew, distract yourself for a minute or two and see if the feeling goes away. If that doesn't work, consider buying bitter-tasting polish that's designed to dissuade you from putting your nails anywhere near your mouth.

Healthy Mouth Recipe

Oven-Roasted Sweet-Potato Wedges

Craving french fries? Whip up these oven-roasted sweet-potato wedges instead. A healthier way to satisfy those cravings, this recipe delivers more taste too, with a kick provided by mustard, garlic, and rosemary. Try them with a dip, as a snack all by themselves, or as a side dish.

Ingredients

- 3 small sweet potatoes (about 2 pounds)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons garlic-flavored olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Preparation

Preheat oven to 450°.

Peel sweet potatoes; cut each potato lengthwise into 8 wedges. In a large bowl, combine sweet potatoes and remaining ingredients; toss well to coat. Arrange potatoes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake potatoes at 450° for 30 minutes or until soft and lightly browned, turning wedges after the first 15 minutes. Serve immediately.

