

Benefits Spotlight

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Should You Invest in Polarized Sunglasses?

Not all pairs of sunglasses are created equal. You can buy them for a few bucks at a gas station, or spend half your paycheck on a designer pair. Some come in kooky shapes and colors, and others boast UV protection. But what about polarized sunglasses?

Polarized sunglasses often come with a higher price tag — are they worth it? Should you invest in a polarized pair or spend your dollars elsewhere?

What Are Polarized Sunglasses?

Polarized sunglasses contain a chemical on the lenses that filters light that bounces off a surface (such as light that reflects off a lake or a road). This type of light can cause uncomfortable glare and strain your eyes.

Although polarized lenses will reduce glare and harmful sun rays from reaching your eyes, they do darken how things typically appear. On the bright side, the images will appear sharper, allowing you to see more fine details without straining your eyes.

If you spend a lot of time outdoors, especially if near snow or bodies of water, polarized glasses are a great choice to reduce eye strain and help you see better when you're surrounded by highly reflective surfaces. Roads also reflect sunlight, so if you spend a lot of time driving, polarized sunglasses may be helpful.

It's important to know that just because a label on a pair of sunglasses says it protects against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays, that does not mean the sunglasses are polarized. The label on polarized sunglasses will clearly state "polarized."

Drawbacks of Polarized Sunglasses

Polarized sunglasses are a great option if you spend a lot of time outdoors or on the road, but they can be less ideal in some situations.

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, polarized sunglasses can make certain screens difficult to see. Reading the screen on your cell phone, ATM machine or some car dashboard controls may be harder because polarized glasses make things appear darker than usual.

Do Non-Polarized Sunglasses Protect Your Eyes?

If you don't want to purchase a polarized pair of sunglasses, you can still protect your eyes from the sun's harmful rays by wearing a pair that protects against UV rays (most pairs will note whether they protect against UV rays on the sunglasses packaging or label). Wearing sunglasses, even if they aren't polarized, will go a long way toward protecting your eyes from sun damage.

If you want to invest in a great pair of sunglasses, it's a good idea to talk to your eye doctor. He or she can provide recommendations, so you'll have confidence that the pair you buy is well worth your money.

SOURCES:

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/are-polarized-sunglasses-worth-the-extra-money/>

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/glasses-contacts/polarized-lenses>

3 Herbs That Support Oral Health

Although herbs can be grown indoors year-round, many people find the warmer spring days the perfect time to fill a pot with these delicious and aromatic plants in their outdoor gardens.

Herbs have many benefits in health and cuisine, but three popular varieties also contain added benefits for your mouth. Read more about them below, and enjoy a recipe on how to use them in a refreshing drink.

1. **Mint:** Mint is good for your dental health in obvious ways — and not-so-obvious ones. First, you likely already know that this herb's minty freshness can help erase bad breath (though its effects are short lived, so don't forgo your twice-daily brushing and flossing).

But what you may not know is that the cooling flavor of mint can actually reduce sugar cravings. So, next time you think you want a cookie, try brewing a cup of peppermint tea — you might just find that it satisfies your sweet craving without the bacteria-loving sugar.

You can get the oral health benefits of mint in both fresh and dried varieties. It's commonly used in teas, but you can also sprinkle some on top of salads or fruit, blend it into a smoothie, or simply infuse some fresh mint leaves into a glass of water.

2. **Rosemary:** Dairy products are the most well-known sources of calcium, but you may be surprised to learn that rosemary contains calcium, too. Calcium is an essential nutrient for your teeth, as it strengthens your enamel (the hard, outer coating on your teeth), prevents tooth decay and can even restore tooth areas that were previously worn down by acidic food and drink.

You can get rosemary's calcium benefits whether you use it fresh or dried. Rosemary is a popular herb in poultry dishes, but it's also a refreshing addition to teas.

3. **Sage:** Like rosemary, sage contains another key nutrient for bone and teeth health: vitamin K. Sage is also high in antioxidants, which help your body ward off diseases, including gum disease and inflammation in your mouth.

Sage is a great herb for savory dishes: Add some thinly chopped leaves to scrambled eggs, as a garnish for soup or as part of a poultry marinade.

Mouth-friendly Herbal Tea

One of the best ways to incorporate more herbs into your diet is by drinking them in tea. Tea is surprisingly simple to make, and this recipe packs in four healthful herbs. The full batch makes 18 servings, so you can quickly brew a cup whenever the mood to sip and relax strikes. This tea may be enjoyed hot or cold.

Ingredients:

- 6 tablespoons dried mint
- 1 tablespoon dried sage
- 1 tablespoon dried rosemary
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 cup water

Directions:

1. Combine all four herbs in an airtight container.
2. Place 1½ teaspoons of tea mix in a mug or glass.
3. Crush the herb mixture with a spoon until they become fragrant.
4. Add 1 cup of boiling water (or cold water with ice, if you prefer).
5. Cover and let the water sit for 10 minutes.
6. Strain tea into the mug or glass, and throw away the dried herbs.

Seeing Your Dentist Is Your Best Defense

Getting older comes with a new set of health concerns, but some simple strategies can prevent them from interfering with your life. For example, drinking plenty of water is a tried-and-true health practice that will continue to serve you well throughout the years. Another good piece of advice is to talk to your doctor about the side effects associated with any new medications; many medications can cause dental health issues, such as dry mouth, so being prepared with a plan for addressing it will help.

Lastly, maintaining your twice-yearly preventive visits with your dentist is crucial to keeping good oral health. Since original Medicare does not cover routine dental care, consider whether an individual plan or Medicare Advantage with dental is right for you during retirement. Most Delta Dental of Iowa plans cover 100% of preventive dental visits.

These visits not only help your dentist identify any problems early but are also a good opportunity to tell your dentist about any pain or other symptoms (lumps, swelling, etc.) that you're experiencing. Your dentist will help find a solution to get you back to enjoying your life to the fullest.

SOURCES

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK507826/>, National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2021

<https://www.nof.org/preventing-fractures/general-facts/what-women-need-to-know/>, National Osteoporosis Foundation

https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/adult-oral-health/adult_older.htm, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021