

# Healthy You

FAST FACTS FOR YOUR HEALTH

## How Good Oral Health Is Good for Your Heart

Medical researchers have long explored how poor oral health is linked to increased risk for certain chronic diseases, including cardiovascular (heart) disease. But there's no scientific study that proves that poor oral health directly causes heart disease.

However, that doesn't mean oral health and heart health aren't connected. Several studies have shown associations between the two.

Here's a snapshot of the research on oral health's connection to heart health:

- Studies have found that people with gum disease, or periodontitis, have a heightened risk of heart disease.
- Tooth loss has been linked to coronary artery disease.
- Research has shown that people with poor oral health have higher risk for developing a bacterial infection that can flow through the blood, potentially affecting the heart valves.
- Research has established a solid link between diabetes and heart health, as uncontrolled diabetes can harm your heart. Studies have shown that gum disease treatment is important for people with diabetes, so gum disease treatment may deliver indirect heart health benefits.

### Reduce Your Risk with Simple Strategies

The true connection between oral health and your heart are unclear, but one thing is for sure: Maintaining your dental health is always a good idea.

These oral health basics go a long way:

- Brush and floss twice daily. If you struggle brushing or flossing, talk to your dentist about products that can make these tasks easier.
- Rinse with a mouthwash to remove extra food particles and freshen breath.

- Keep your twice-yearly preventive dental visits. These appointments not only give your teeth a deep clean, they're an opportunity for your dentist to identify any possible problems early. Early detection means less invasive treatments that are often less expensive.

**The bottom line:** More research is needed to make a definitive link between oral health and heart health. But one thing is for sure: Taking care of your oral health is always worthwhile, and your dentist is a key member of your healthcare team. If you are interested in exploring more about the connection between oral health and heart health, talk to your dentist about ways you can support both.

#### **SOURCES:**

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/heart-disease-prevention/faq-20057986>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/gum-disease-and-the-connection-to-heart-disease>

<https://www.heart.org/en/news/2018/11/07/bad-tooth-brushing-habits-tied-to-higher-heart-risk>

## **The Skinny on Juice Cleanses for Oral Health**

We've all been there: You wake up on Jan. 1, and you know you overdid it throughout the holiday season. You feel bloated and heavy, and you need a quick fix. Enter the juice cleanse, which claims to pack lots of nutrients, boost your energy, cut your calorie count and shed pounds fast. But before you take your first sip, you should consider how this type of diet affects your oral health.

### **Why People Turn to Juice Cleanses**

Juice cleanses are intended to temporarily replace your typical solid food diet. The concept is that the produce-filled juices rapidly rid your body of toxins, like bacteria from unhealthy foods and drinks. When your body has a build-up of these toxins, you tend to feel it in the form of headaches, bloat, pain and fatigue.

Juice cleanses are not intended to be used as a sustainable lifestyle. Rather, they should be used for a short period of time — typically a few days. People who support juice cleanses say that the concentrated nutrients from fruit and vegetable juices encourage your body to remove toxins quicker. As a result, you feel more energized, have a lower appetite and lose weight.

### **What Health Experts Think**

So, are juice cleanses the miracle quick fix your body needs to recharge and undo damage? Health and nutrition experts say no.

The medical community largely does not support the practice of juice cleansing because there's no research that points to the claims that juice cleansing boosts toxin removal and better health.

It's important to understand that juice cleansing isn't selective about what it eliminates. In other words, it doesn't just remove bad things like toxins from your body, it also removes good nutrients as well. When your body is "shocked" into flushing out a lot of nutrients, you may experience blood sugar spikes and drops, low blood pressure, lack of concentration and tiredness.

## How Juice Cleanses Affect Your Teeth and Mouth

Dentists agree: Juice cleanses are not good for your dental health. Although fruits have many health benefits, they are high in natural sugar. Juice cleanses contain a lot of sugar, and the bacteria in your mouth that cause tooth decay love feeding on that sugar.

Juice cleanses are designed to replace your regular diet, so you'll be drinking juices regularly throughout the day. That means a lot of sugar. And if even the sugars are naturally occurring, they can still be harmful to your teeth.

In addition to feeding cavity-causing bacteria, some types of fruit, particularly citrus fruits like oranges and lemons, can damage your teeth enamel. When your enamel wears down, you may experience tooth sensitivity, which can cause a lot of pain.

If you're looking to undo some holiday damage, the best way is to focus on a balanced diet filled with whole foods and plenty of water. You won't see results in just a few days, but it won't take long for you to feel the positive effects. Plus, you'll enjoy the satisfaction of long-term results that don't compromise your overall or oral health.