

Enjoy That Nibble of Cheese—It’s Also Benefitting Your Oral Health

Mystery writer Avery Aames once said, “Life is great. Cheese makes it better.” Billions of people around the world would tend to agree: Humanity has been having a collective love affair with this form of curdled milk for around 8,000 years. And, why not: Cheese is not only exquisitely delicious, it’s also good for you—especially for your teeth.

No wonder, then, that “turophiles” have a day of celebration all to themselves—National Cheese Lovers Day on January 20th. In honor of the day cheese aficionados would definitely make a national holiday, let’s take a closer look at this delectable food, and why eating it could do a world of good for your dental health.

As a dairy food, cheese contains a plethora of vitamins and minerals, many of which specifically benefit dental health. Every bite of velvety Gouda or pungent Limburger contains minerals like calcium and phosphate, which—along with the compound casein phosphate—work together to strengthen teeth and bones.

Cheese also helps tooth enamel defend against its one true nemesis, oral acid. Prolonged contact with acid softens the mineral content in enamel and may eventually cause it to erode. Without an ample layer of enamel, teeth are sitting ducks for tooth decay. A nibble of cheese, on the other hand, can quickly raise your mouth’s pH out of the acidic danger zone. Cheese also stimulates saliva, the mouth’s natural acid neutralizer.

Because of these qualities, cheese is a good alternative to carbohydrate-based snacks and foods, at home or on the go. Carbs, particularly sugar, provide oral bacteria a ready food supply, which enables them to multiply rapidly. As a result, the opportunity for gum infection also increases.

Bacteria also generate a digestive by-product, which we’ve already highlighted—acid. So, when oral bacterial populations rise, so do acid levels, increasing the threat to tooth enamel. By substituting cheese for sweets, you’ll help limit bacterial growth and these potential consequences.

You may get some of the same effect if you also add cheese to a carbohydrate-laden meal or, as is common with the French, eat it as dessert afterwards. Often a tasty complement to wine or fruit, cheese could help blunt the effect of these carbohydrates within your mouth.

In a world where much of what we like to eat doesn’t promote our health, cheese is the notable exception. And our enjoyment of this perennial food is all the more delightful, knowing it’s also strengthening and protecting our oral health.



