



Easy Fixes for Your 3 Most Common Smile Problems



Dr. Debra Glassman

You probably spend plenty of money on skin care products to fight wrinkles and dark spots. But how much attention do you give your smile? Just like your skin changes as you age, your teeth also start to show signs of wear and tear as you get older. According to the World Dental Federation, 90 percent of people across the globe will deal with some sort of oral disease in their lifetime.

In honor of World Oral Health Day, we asked top dentists for the best ways to treat common dental problems so you can show off your smile with confidence at any age.

Eating foods like oranges, raspberries, and pineapples, which have a high acidic content, can be great for your waistline but not for your smile. These foods can increase your risk of acid erosion, the wearing down of your tooth's hard outer layer. Coffee and soda are bad for your teeth's enamel, too.

"When acid hits the enamel, it wears down the surface of your tooth," says Debra Glassman, DDS, a New York City dentist who has teamed up with ProNamel for the brand's Acid Truth campaign. "This causes your teeth to get weak, dull, thin, and yellower".

Luckily, you don't have to give up your favorite foods and drinks — you just have to change your habits. Sip drinks through a straw to lessen the effect of acid on your teeth. "When you drink through a straw, this doesn't allow the tooth to bathe in the acid liquid," says Glassman.

Swishing water around your mouth after eating and drinking can also help protect your enamel. "If you swish it [water] around and swallow, you're lowering the amount of acid in your oral cavity that causes the erosion," says Glassman.

Bad breath

Garlic, onion, and spices may add tons of flavor to your meals, but they're also most likely the culprit behind smelly breath. To eliminate the stink, pay extra attention to your tongue when you brush and floss.

Many people don't rake or scrape their tongue, they brush it, But brushing your tongue just compacts the debris and bacteria. Tongues must be raked or scraped. You can find a tongue scraper at your local drugstore.

If you like to use mouthwash to fight dragon breath, look for natural formulas that don't contain alcohol or triclosan, an antibiotic. Chronic use of alcohol and antibiotics can cause other, more severe problems than bad breath. Alcohol can irritate canker sores, and some studies have linked mouthwash to oral cancer.

Tooth decay

Need another reason to skip that late-night cookie binge? The World Health Organization recently released new guidelines for decreasing sugar intake — not just for your health's sake, but for your teeth, too, citing research that people who eat more sugar have more tooth decay.

Tooth decay happens when bacteria in your mouth consumes the sugars you eat. The sugar gives the bacteria on your teeth energy, allowing them to multiply and start the process of tooth decay.

The most important thing you can do to prevent decay is also the easiest. If I were to give anyone three tips on oral hygiene, it would be, floss, floss, and floss.

Just make sure you floss before you brush. "Flossing first removes all the food particles from between your teeth," says Glassman. "I found that when patients did it the opposite way — brushing before flossing — the food particles would seep right back into where they were and it wouldn't really be a good cleaning job