

# Healthy Eating



## Vitamins and Minerals: Fortifying Against Poor Oral Health

(NAPS)—Practicing basic oral hygiene, such as brushing, flossing, and going to regular checkups with a dental professional are some of the most important ways to maintain oral health. However, if these practices are not paired with proper nutrition, oral health can still suffer.

Mindfully incorporating foods that are good for oral health can also contribute to overall wellbeing. Certain vitamins and minerals are particularly beneficial for teeth and gums. Many people take dietary supplements to improve their health or fill gaps in their diet. Supplements can also be a viable alternative for people with dietary restrictions or allergies.

### Best vitamins and minerals for oral health and where to eat them

**Calcium** strengthens enamel, which is the hard outer layer of teeth. It is widely known that cheese, low-sugar yogurt, and other dairy products contain calcium, but many seeds, beans, lentils, and leafy greens are also rich sources.

**Phosphorous** works with calcium to build strong teeth, as well as bones. Meats like chicken, turkey, and seafood are good sources of phosphorus. Sunflower and pumpkin seeds and whole grains are rich in this mineral, too.

**Iron** is a mineral used in the production of hemoglobin and having an iron deficiency can lead to harmful consequences for the body. Teeth are no exception. Eggs, beans, meat, poultry, fish, and whole grains all contain iron.

**Vitamin C** helps to synthesize collagen in the mouth. Eating foods containing vitamin C help strengthen teeth and protect against gingivitis, an early form of gum disease. Citrus fruits, such as oranges, strawberries, and bell peppers, are some of the best sources of vitamin C. When taking vitamin C as a supplement, it is best to avoid liquid or gummies as they can erode enamel.

**Vitamin K**, and more specifically vitamin K2, helps re-mineralize tooth structure. Leafy greens such as spinach,



### Here's advice you can get your teeth into: Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables for good oral health.

and cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and kale contain vitamins K and C, as well as phosphorous.

**Vitamin B**, and B12 in particular, helps the body absorb calcium. It is found in many animal proteins and some fortified cereals. For those who do not eat meat or have dietary restrictions, B-complex vitamin supplements are available in place of animal proteins.

**Vitamin D**, like phosphorous, helps the body absorb calcium. Few foods naturally contain vitamin D, the exceptions being fatty fish, egg yolks, and some species of mushrooms. Spending time in the sunlight and taking vitamin D supplements are proven ways to increase levels of vitamin D in the body.

### Eating thoughtfully to support oral health

According to Dr. Greg Theis, Vice President, Dental Services at Delta Dental of Wisconsin, "Dietary choices play an important role in overall oral health, just like brushing or flossing daily. Taking care to eat foods that are rich in essential vitamins and minerals is an important step in keeping teeth strong and healthy."

Ultimately, eating a vitamin- and mineral-rich diet not only promotes overall wellbeing, but directly affects oral health. Taking supplements to compensate for nutritional gaps is a great way to maintain appropriate levels of crucial vitamins.