



ALCOHOL AND YOUR ORAL HEALTH

Learn about the effects of alcohol use and abuse on your oral health.

Generally when we think of the effects of alcohol use and abuse on our health, we think of our liver. But what most don't realize is that drinking too much alcohol can directly affect our oral health, as well.

What happens to your mouth when you drink alcohol.

Having enough saliva is critical to keeping your mouth clean and healthy. Essentially, saliva helps to water down or wash away the harmful acids produced by plaque. But when you drink alcohol, your saliva production slows down, can cause dehydration and may contribute to plaque build-up.*

Long-term alcohol abuse can lead to a number of oral health issues, including:**

- › Gum disease
- › Tooth decay
- › Oral cancer
- › Dry mouth
- › Poor compliance with home care regimens or routine dentist visits

* American Academy of Periodontology. "Study: Alcohol Consumption Could Have a Negative Impact on Gum Health," June 2015. <https://www.perio.org/consumer/alcohol-negative-effect-on-gum-health>

** Jill C. Obrochta, RDH, BS; Elizabeth McClure, RDH, MEd; Patricia Frese, RDH, Med; "Oral Implications of Chemical Dependency & Substance Abuse for the Dental Professional." Accessed January 2016 <http://www.dentalcare.com/en-US/dental-education/continuing-education/ce415/ce415.aspx?ModuleName=coursecontent&PartID=3&SectionID=0>

If you're going to drink alcohol, here are some tips to help keep your mouth healthy.

- › **Drink responsibly and in moderation.** If you think you have a problem with alcohol addiction, talk with your doctor or dentist to get help.
- › **Drink plenty of water.** Drinking water can help wash away food and acid, especially after eating.
- › **Brush and floss daily.** It's very important to add flossing to your routine because a toothbrush can't reach between your teeth where tartar and plaque can form.
- › **Visit your dentist.** Make regular trips to the dentist to help reduce tartar build-up. While you're there, be honest with your dentist about your alcohol consumption.

Together, all the way.®



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