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### NUTRITION

# 10 holiday foods and drinks dentists won't touch



By Michael Serrur

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The holiday season, which unofficially starts with Halloween and ends on New Year's Day, is the time to cut loose, put inhibitions aside, and eat and drink, well, whatever looks good. The reckless consumption of candies, pies, beverages (alcoholic and otherwise), meats, and sides carries with it a number of potential risks and some of these are dental, because many of these sweet and savory delights can do some serious damage to your teeth. The mixture of sticky candies, sugary sweets, and acidic alcohols and sodas is something out of a dentist's nightmare. By knowing which foods to eat in moderation, which to chew carefully, and which to simply avoid, you can avoid that emergency crown replacement and protect yourself from cavities.



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The Daily Meal asked nine dentists and dental professionals to give us their lists of holiday foods and drinks they won't touch. Our experts include: Fountain of Youth Dental in San Antonio led by Chris Cappetta, D.D.S.; OBC in Chantilly, Virginia led by Ira Handschuh, D.D.S.; The Dental Design Center in White Plains, New York; Brandi Dupont, D.M.D., chief dental officer at Community Health Alliance in Reno, Nevada; Victor D.D.S. in New York City; Hugh Flax D.D.S. in Atlanta; Samantha Sacchetti, D.M.D. in Chicago; Kami H. Vista, California; Melissa Thompson, D.D.S. in Woburn, Massachusetts; and Harold Katz, D.D.S., founder of Breath Clinics and developer of the TheraBreath line of premium oral care products.

There was a general consensus among all of these dental professionals that sugar, acids, alcohol, and caffeine do the most damage to your teeth and gums. Acidic foods like citrus, sour candies, or tea can wear away at your enamel and lead to greater tooth sensitivity and a higher risk of fracture; beverages like eggnog contain the "triple threat" of sugar, alcohol, and dairy. Also worth noting is that some foods affect certain age groups differently. Adults are more likely to fracture a crown or a bridge, but they are less likely to suffer from tooth decay than someone

Here are the holiday foods and drinks dentists won't touch.

### **Bourbon and Other Spirits**

Bourbon might be a tasty addition to eggnog, but it can wreak havoc on your mouth. Dr. Harold Katz says that bourbon "makes the mouth very dry, which then creates an environment prime for gum disease, tooth decay, and bad breath."

## Candy Canes

These iconic holiday treats are better left as a Christmas tree decoration. Candy canes and other hard and notorious bad for teeth because they are packed with sugar and can also cause chipped or broken teeth. Crutchfield warns.

## Citrus Fruits

Citrus fruits are associated with numerous health benefits, but, sadly, many of those don't apply to dental health. Acidic foods such as limes, oranges and other citruses can erode enamel over time, causing sensitive and worn teeth. Hoss notes.

## Coffee

"High caffeine drinks cause reduced salivary flow. Saliva assists in removing food particles and unwanted sugars from the mouth. If salivary flow decreases, then sugar and food remain on the teeth and gums leading to an increased risk of problems," notes Dr. Ira Handschuh says.

## Corn on the Cob

Corn is nutritious, but eating it off the cob can be tricky. "This is a difficult food to eat because biting into it can cause you to crack a filling or loosen sealant you may have in your mouth. Not to mention it's terrible to get out of braces or retainers, and can damage orthodontic wires. A better way to eat corn is off the cob, since you'll have a better chance of avoiding gum disease," Fountain of Youth Dental points out.

## Dots and Jujubes

"These are great for decorating gingerbread houses, awful for your teeth," Dr. Samantha Sacchetti explains. The hard, sticky candy that you have an option to suck on, you have really no option but to chew them. The chewing it takes for these things (longer if they're from a stale gingerbread house) also can lead to some temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain. For a candy that doesn't even taste that good, it's just not worth it.

## Dried fruit

Dried fruit is a plentiful source of fiber and nutrients, but these common holiday munchies might increase your risk of getting a cavity. "Although dried fruit may be a better option to snack on than a cookie, dried fruit is sticky and will get in your teeth and cause decay," notes Fountain of Youth Dental.

## EggNog

Eggnog is one of the worst holiday beverages for your dental health because it contains sugar, alcohol, and dairy. "Dairy proteins are easily converted to odorous sulfur compounds by oral bacteria. Sugar feeds

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alcohol creates a dry mouth, which is an ideal environment for the bugs to multiply. Eggnog is terrible.

## Fruitcake

If you're looking for an excuse to avoid eating fruitcake this Christmas, here it is. The sticky and sweet "can cause tooth decay and if you have weak teeth or crowns these foods can actually cause them to Flax warns.

## Hot Chocolate

There's nothing more appropriate for a cold winter morning than a steaming cup of hot cocoa with a p floating right in the middle. Unfortunately, "hot cocoa's high sugar content can lead to tooth decay, an content may lead to bad breath," Katz notes

[Click here for the 21 Holiday Foods and Drinks Dentists Won't Touch Slideshow](#)

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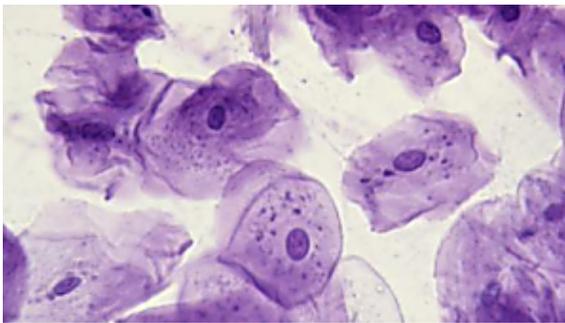
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