



The older you get, the more decisions you will make...

Limiting Snacks for a Super Smile

Snacking frequently throughout the day can increase the risk of developing tooth decay. Plaque, a sticky film of bacteria, constantly forms on teeth. When you eat foods or drink beverages that contain sugars or starches, the bacteria in plaque produce harmful acids that attack your tooth enamel. These acids can linger in your mouth for up to 20 minutes after you eat. Repeated or prolonged exposure to these acids can break down the enamel and tooth decay can develop.

Sipping soda and chomping on chips throughout the day can eat away at your pearly whites. To keep your smile healthy, limit snacks and eat nutritious, well-balanced meals made up of foods from the five major food groups—breads, cereals and other grains; fruits, vegetables; meat, fish, poultry and protein alternates; and milk, yogurt and cheese. If you need a snack, choose nutritious foods for good general and oral health!

The Piercing Truth About Mouth Jewelry

You are probably not at all shocked to see people with pierced tongues, lips, cheeks or other places around the mouth, but you might be surprised to know that these piercings can be dangerous.

Your mouth contains millions of bacteria, and infection is a common complication of oral piercing. Pain and swelling are other possible

side effects of piercing. Your tongue—the most popular piercing site in the mouth—could swell large enough to close off your airway! Piercing also can cause uncontrollable bleeding or nerve damage. Damage to the tongue's blood vessels can cause serious blood loss.

Even if the piercing injury doesn't cause any trouble, you still have to be aware of the hazards the jewelry presents:


- You can easily choke on any studs, barbells or hoops that come loose in your mouth.
- Chipped or cracked teeth can develop from contact with the jewelry.

This fashion statement involves more than just deciding on jewelry style or placement—this decision could have major consequences for your oral health, as well.

Tobacco—Bad News in Any Form

Tobacco use not only causes bad breath but also brings cancer-causing chemicals in direct contact with your tongue, gums and cheek lining. Because the early signs of oral cancer usually are not painful, people often ignore them. If it's not caught in the early stages, oral cancer can require extensive, sometimes disfiguring, surgery. Even worse, it can kill you.

If you are a tobacco user, watch out for a sore that won't heal; white or red leathery patches on your lips, and on or under your



tongue; pain, tenderness or numbness anywhere in the mouth or lips; difficulty in chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving your jaw or tongue; or a change in the way your teeth fit together.

Smokeless tobacco packs an extra punch. Manufacturers often mix sugar in the tobacco to make it taste better—sugar that can cause you to develop cavities.

Face it—there's nothing cool about tobacco use. Now that you're in the know, why not turn your back on tobacco? Talk with your dentist about getting help to quit.

Give Your Smile a Sporting Chance—Wear a Mouthguard

A properly fitted mouthguard, or mouth protector, is an important piece of athletic gear that can help protect your smile, and should be used during any activity that could result in a blow to the face or mouth.

Mouthguards help prevent broken teeth and injuries to the lips, tongue, face or jaw. A properly fitted mouthguard will stay in place while you are wearing it, making it easy for you to talk and breathe.

There are three types of mouthguards: the ready-made, or stock, mouthguard; the mouth-formed 'boil and bite' mouthguard; and the custom-made mouthguard made by your dentist. All three mouthguards provide protection, but vary in comfort and cost.

Don't take your teeth for granted. Be cool and protect your smile. Wear a mouthguard.