

Holiday Treats: The Naughty and the Nice



When you're filling up on holiday favorites, don't forget your teeth. Find out the hidden dangers of classic holiday foods and drinks — and what you can do to protect your mouth.

Gingerbread House

- **Uh-oh:** Talk about bad news for your teeth: sugar and starch in one sweet package, topped with icing and gummies.
- **Tips:** Build the house for decoration, not dessert.

Sweet Potato Pie

- **Uh-oh:** The flour and sugar in this dessert make it delicious for both you and the bacteria living in your mouth.
- **Tips:** Cut down on the sugar — the natural sugars in sweet potatoes go a long way. And don't forget to brush afterwards.

Fruitcake & Panettone

- **Uh-oh:** Packed with dried fruit, these sweet desserts can get stuck in and between your teeth.
- **Tips:** Brush and floss after eating.

Candy Canes

- **Uh-oh:** If you let them dissolve in your mouth, you're putting your teeth at risk for decay — but crunch on them, and you could crack a tooth.
- **Tips:** Save candy canes for festive decorations. Satisfy your sweet tooth with dark chocolate instead, which has less sugar and dissolves quickly in the mouth.

Latkes

- **Uh-oh:** Traditionally eaten with applesauce, these starch-heavy potato pancakes can encourage cavities.
- **Tips:** Avoid applesauce that includes any added sugar, including high-fructose syrup. Drink water with your latkes, or brush afterwards — before the starch can feed the bacteria in your mouth.



Popcorn

- **Uh-oh:** The kernels can get stuck between your teeth and in your gums, creating a haven for bacteria. With caramel or kettle corn, the added sugar increases your chance of decay.
- **Tips:** Avoid flavored popcorns, and always floss afterwards.

Eggnog

- **Uh-oh:** High in sugar, this classic holiday drink is a serious cavity-causer. When it contains alcohol, it has the added no-no of drying out the mouth, which increases the impact of bacteria.
- **Tips:** Cut the alcohol content, swap out sugar for a tooth-friendly substitute like xylitol or erythritol, and sip water to wash it down.

Hot Apple Cider

- **Uh-oh:** This holiday drink packs a one-two punch against your teeth. The acid wears down your enamel, and the natural and added sugars feed bacteria.
- **Tips:** Don't add any sugar or syrup, and drink with a straw. Wash it down with some water, and wait half an hour before brushing so your enamel has time to harden.

Hot Chocolate

- **Uh-oh:** Packed with sugar, this wintertime favorite can leave your teeth coated with sticky residue.
- **Tips:** Reduce sugar's contact with your teeth by opting for a dentist-approved sweetener or drinking with a straw. Say no to mini marshmallows.

Wine

- **Uh-oh:** Popular choices with holiday dinners, both red and white wine can stain your teeth, soften your enamel and dry out your mouth.
- **Tips:** Drink with food, not alone, and keep a glass of water handy. Always wait half an hour after drinking to brush your teeth, so you don't scratch your softened enamel with the bristles.



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