



# The Benefits of Chewing Gum

See how chewing gum can benefit your smile.

## How Can Gum Benefit Me?

Aside from what might seem like the obvious benefit of chewing gum to sweep up some of the food particles left in our teeth after eating, there are additional benefits we can't even see with our eyes!

It all starts with bacteria. Bacteria naturally live in our mouths, in the plaque on our teeth. When we eat, tiny food particles linger on our teeth. When the bacteria in our plaque feeds on these food particles, acid is produced. This acid can soften our protective enamel, putting our teeth at risk for cavities.

Chewing gum increases the production of saliva, which is a natural antacid and can help:

- Neutralize the acid produced by bacteria
- Wash away harmful bacteria
- Neutralize acids present in the mouth stemming from acid reflux and heartburn

## Does it Matter What Kind of Gum I Chew?

It does. Unfortunately, not all gum is created equally. Many of the sweetest and flavorful gums contain sugar, or sucrose. Sucrose is exactly the type of food that the bacteria in our mouths love to eat, so if you are looking to reduce bacteria to prevent the acid production, which softens your enamel, it is best to stick with a sugar-free option.

Granted, being labelled "sugar free" or "sugarless" doesn't necessarily mean that the gum will be free of all sugar. The [FDA](#) (Food and Drug Administration) has advised that foods can be labeled as such only if they contain less than 0.5 grams of sugar per labeled serving.

Many sugar-free gums use sweeteners that bacteria don't like to eat, like:

- Sugar alcohols (sorbitol or xylitol)
- Artificial sweeteners (aspartame, saccharin, or stevia)

The flavor of gum you choose can also have an impact on the benefits you could experience from chewing gum. For example, orange, lemon, or other citrus flavoring could be high in citric acid, making your saliva's job as an acid buster an uphill battle.



## Benefits from Gum?

We know! It seems too good to be true. Many of us think of chewing gum along the lines of candy, and we all know that candy can't claim to have many benefits for our teeth. Gum, on the other hand, does have candy beat in that regard.

## When Should I Chew Gum?

You'll experience the most benefit from chewing gum if you do so after you eat. This will help get rid of those food particles before they become harmful to your tooth enamel.

## Are There Any Risks to Chewing Gum?

Besides negating some of the benefits of chewing gum by selecting a gum with loads of sugar or high in acid, the risks are minimal.

Some types of gum can stick to certain dental work, like bridges. However, some brands of gum are specifically formulated to prevent this. Check with your dentist to get their recommendation of gum brand if you are concerned. Also, those who experience jaw pain or issues with TMJ/TMD (temporomandibular joint disorder) may feel a flare-up when chewing gum for long periods of time, so one should discuss with their dentist before taking up a gum-chewing habit.



For more oral health information, please visit our website at [www.bcbsfedental.com](http://www.bcbsfedental.com).



@bcbsfedental