

How to prevent 'wine teeth' this holiday

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The study finds wine menus with robust descriptions and pairing suggestions fare better than vintages and prices alone. Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Why do some people's teeth stain after drinking red wine, and how can you prevent it during the holidays?

The answer is the relationship between the nature of wine and your [tooth enamel](#), said Uchenna Akosa, a dentist who heads Rutgers Health University Dental Associates in New Brunswick, the faculty practice of Rutgers School of Dental Medicine.

"When you drink [red wine](#), you're encountering a triple threat to your teeth's whiteness: anthocyanins, which are the pigments in grapes that give red wine its rich color; tannins, which help bind the pigment to your teeth; and the acidity found in wine, which etches your enamel, making it more porous and it easier for the stain to stick," she said. "The strength of your enamel and how prone you are to plaque build-up is key to how much your teeth might stain."

Akosa added: "Of course, wine is not the only culprit. Anything that can stain a shirt can stain your teeth, such as black coffee, black tea, berries, balsamic vinegar, chocolates, sweets and smoking. Drinks like soda and juices harm the enamel and make teeth more susceptible to stains."

Here are Akosa's tips for preventing wine teeth:

- Brush before, but not immediately after, drinking: Since plaque can make it look like your teeth are stained, you should brush your teeth 30 minutes before drinking, but not right after since toothpaste can cause more etching.
- Don't drink white wine before red wine: The extra acid in the [white wine](#) will exacerbate the staining.
- Drink water while drinking wine: Swishing your mouth with water, which is neither basic or acidic, after drinking wine helps to reduce the wine's acidity and stimulates saliva flow, which is critical in fighting harmful bacteria and maintaining the ideal pH in your mouth. Chewing food is equally important because it also stimulates saliva. Cheese is ideal to pair with wine as it both stimulates saliva and reduces the acidity from the wine.

- Brush your teeth correctly and get regular dental cleanings to keep your enamel strong: Cleanings can help remove plaque, which is a bacterial soft coating on teeth. If not cleaned, it can result in cavities.

When brushing teeth, use a soft toothbrush; if you have gum problems, use an extra-soft brush. Place the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the gums—not straight—and gently brush back and forth in short strokes. You should brush the outside, inside and chewing surfaces. People often do not brush the chewing surface or the inner surfaces.

Before bed, use a water flosser or dental floss to remove particles. Although every toothpaste on the market has five basic ingredients—fluoride, glycerin, sorbitol, [calcium carbonate](#) and sodium lauryl sulfate—not all whitening toothpastes are good for your [teeth](#). Be careful of products that contain ingredients that are not good for [long-term use](#), such as charcoal or [sodium bicarbonate](#), which is baking soda. Rather, look for [natural ingredients](#) such as organic coconut oil, activated charcoal or lemon oil for whitening.

Provided by Rutgers University-New Brunswick

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