

Avoiding 'wine teeth' at those holiday parties

December 12 2023, by Robin Foster



The holidays are all about parties, and parties are all about drinking wine. But if you're a red wine lover, how do you avoid stained teeth?

"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 easier for the stain to stick," explained Uchenna Akosa, a dentist who heads Rutgers Health University Dental Associates in New Brunswick, the faculty practice of Rutgers School of Dental Medicine.

"The strength of your enamel and how prone you are to plaque build-up is key to how much your teeth might stain."

But wine isn't the only food or drink that can damage your teeth, she added.

"Anything that can stain a shirt can stain your teeth, such as black coffee, black tea, berries, [balsamic vinegar](#), chocolates, sweets and smoking," she said in a Rutgers news release. "Drinks like soda and juices harm the enamel and make teeth more susceptible to stains."

As for red wine, Akosa has some tips for preventing stained teeth:

- 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](#) because the extra acid in [white wine](#) will exacerbate the staining
- Swishing your mouth with water after drinking wine helps cut 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 stimulates saliva production and lowers 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 can help cause cavities
- When brushing your 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 and gently brush back and forth in short strokes. You should brush the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of your teeth
- Before bed, use a water flosser or dental floss to remove particles caught between your teeth

While all toothpastes typically contain five basic ingredients—fluoride, glycerin, sorbitol, [calcium carbonate](#) and sodium lauryl sulfate—not all whitening toothpastes are safe for your teeth. Be careful of products that contain ingredients such as charcoal or [sodium bicarbonate](#) (baking soda). Rather, look for [natural ingredients](#) such as organic coconut oil, activated charcoal or lemon oil for whitening, Akosa said.

More information: Visit the American Dental Association for more on [teeth whitening](#).

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Provided by Rutgers University

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