

Savor your coffee—and a bright smile

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(HealthDay)—Coffee may stain your teeth, but its health benefits outweigh that problem, dental experts say.

Research suggests that java may help protect the liver; reduce risk of cancer, [heart disease](#) and diabetes; boost metabolism; and keep your brain sharp, according to the Academy of General Dentistry.

There's also early evidence that coffee may help protect [teeth](#) by preventing bone loss in the jaw, noted the academy, which has members in the United States and Canada.

"Coffee in moderation has many nutritional benefits," said Nasir Bashirelahi in an academy news release. He's a professor at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry.

But if the thought of stained teeth concerns you, there are things you can do to minimize or prevent discoloration, the academy says.

For instance, sip through a straw to reduce the amount of coffee that touches your teeth. And rinse your mouth with water after drinking coffee.

Because acidic drinks such as coffee soften [tooth enamel](#) and dentin beneath it, you should wait 30 minutes after drinking coffee to brush your teeth. The enamel starts to harden within a half hour.

If your teeth do develop stains from [coffee](#), a dentist can safely bleach your teeth. However, bleaching doesn't prevent future staining, so you may require repeated treatments.

These tips appeared in a recent issue of the journal *General Dentistry*.

More information: Harvard Medical School has more on [coffee and health](#).

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