



EATING 101

RU DINING HEALTHY?

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RU HEALTHY DINING TEAM
A Joint Program Between Rutgers Dining Services and The New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health

Tooth be Told

Your mouth is home to millions of bacteria, and they are always hungry. When you eat, they eat too. The foods you choose can either fuel these harmful microbes or help protect your smile, directly shaping your future oral health. These pesky mouth microbes primarily feast on sugar, and release acid as a byproduct. That acid erodes your enamel, wears down your teeth, and causes cavities. The good news? You can “brush off” future dental drama by being mindful of what is on your plate in the dining hall. The Healthy Dining Team is here to give you the whole *tooth* and nothing but the *tooth* on how to fuel your body without destroying your smile.

Smile Squad:

- **Fiber Rich Foods:** Apples, carrots, and leafy greens act as natural toothbrushes. Their fiber scrubs your teeth as you chew, which helps remove plaque. They also stimulate saliva production, which neutralizes the acids that can lead to cavities.
- **Calcium Rich Foods:** No bones about it, calcium is good for your teeth. It is the key mineral in tooth enamel, and its erosion causes cavities. But luckily, foods such as milk (regular or calcium-fortified plant-based), cheese, and yogurt are high in dietary calcium, and refortify your smile.
- **Water:** The best everyday cleaner for the mouth is not mouthwash, but water. Like saliva, water helps rise food particles and neutralize acids in the mouth, lowering the risk of tooth decay.



Plaque Pack:

- **Candy and Sweets:** Candy is a treat for the tongue but tough on the teeth. To protect your smile, swap processed sugars for natural sweets like fruit.
- **Acidic Foods:** Any acids, not just the ones from bacteria, can lead to tooth decay. High sources of acids in foods come from sodas, coffee, and citrus.
- **Sticky Foods:** Do not let food get too attached. Foods like taffy, gummies, or seeds like to overstay their welcome and gradually feed bad bacteria
- **Mitigate the Mess:** The solution is simple: eat sweets with a full meal when saliva is high, and drink water to rinse away the sugar. Regular flossing and brushing are your best bet to remove any remaining food hiding in your teeth.

When the plaque attacks, you fight back!

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References: *The Best Foods for A Healthy Smile and Whole Body*. Available at: <https://dentistry.uic.edu/news-stories/the-best-foods-for-a-healthy-smile-and-whole-body/> Accessed on: 02/27/26. *10 foods and drinks with surprising oral health benefits* Available at: <https://www.dentalhealth.org/blog/10-foods-and-drinks-with-surprising-oral-health-benefits> Accessed on: 02/27/26. *The Best and Worst Foods for Your Teeth*. Available at: <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content?ContentID=4062&ContentTypeID=1> Accessed on: 02/27/26.



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