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The Best White-Teeth Tricks from the Pros

You already know how to brighten your smile—here's how you can *prevent* your teeth from being anything but white.



1. If it'll stain your shirt, it will stain your teeth

Dentists use this as a rule of thumb, says Keith Arbeitman, DDS of NYC-based [Arbeitman and Shein](#). If you're concerned about staining your teeth, then avoid red wine, dark beverages, black teas, soy sauce, balsamic vinegar and dark berry fruits. But note that it's not just about the pigment of your food or drink—acidity plays a role as well. "The acid in white wine is very efficient at dissolving plaque on your teeth, which allows the snack following that glass of wine to penetrate deep into your teeth," warns Arbeitman.

2. Chew crunchy snacks

"Generally abrasive, mildly colorful foods, like celery and carrots or even crunchy nuts and sesame seeds—nothing with dark pigments—help remove plaque naturally and can lighten the appearance of your teeth," explains Arbeitman. "Since you can't control the concentration of acid when you make a home mixture, I wouldn't recommend using this technique more than once or twice a year."

3. Chew sugarless gum

[Nancy M. Rosen, DMD](#) suggests chewing sugarless gum. "When you chew gum, you produce saliva, and saliva helps reduce staining as it moves around your teeth," advises Rosen.

4. Carry a whitening pen

Invest in a teeth whitening pen and keep it in your purse. "Take a quick trip to the ladies room and

paint on the gel—it removes new stains on contact and then dissolves off your teeth quickly," Arbeitman encourages. He recommends the [Zoom Whitening pen](#) from Phillips.

5. Try "oil pulling"

Combine a spoonful of coconut oil with water and rinse. While a number of celebrities believe in this method—Gwyneth Paltrow among them—Arbeitman notes that oil pulling seems safe, but hasn't actually been tested. "The problem with this method is that you need to swish the oil around your mouth for about 20 minutes *a day* for a week for it to effectively dissolve stains on your teeth," explains Arbeitman. "In order to see whitening results, you really need to be disciplined about doing it consistently."

6. Drink water, wait 30 minutes

After you consume something staining, drink or swish water so that your saliva does not stay tinged with the dark color, instructs Rosen. "And then wait 30 minutes before brushing your teeth—if you don't wait, you will be brushing your teeth with the acid of the drink, which can make teeth more susceptible to wear, decay and staining."

7. Pick this berry

Strawberries contain malic acid, a naturally occurring tooth whitening agent. Opt for the red berries for an extra dose of whitening power with your meal or snack.

8. Make a baking soda and hydrogen peroxide paste

It's the oldest DIY whitening remedy in the book—both Rosen and Arbeitman recommend it. "If you really want to kickstart things, use this paste for three or four days in a row. But afterwards, I would recommend only using it for only once or twice a month." Before you make yourself a bulk batch, a warning: "Hydrogen peroxide is a highly caustic solution, capable of seriously damaging the tissues of your mouth. Baking soda is a very abrasive material. Prolonged use of this type of paste may cause sensitivity and even damage your enamel," says Arbeitman.