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Eating After Your Teeth Cleaning Appointment: Your Questions Answered

by Sarah Carpenter

The [American Dental Association](#) recommends dental cleanings twice a year. This is not only for a sparkly smile but to do what your toothbrush and dental floss can't do — detect early signs of oral health issues. How your teeth and gums look can be signs of issues elsewhere in your body. Dentists and licensed and registered dental hygienists are fully trained and skilled to remove tartar, plaque and stains during your dental cleanings. However, what can you eat once the appointment is done? Read on to learn more about the process and the foods and drinks you should avoid and can enjoy post-appointment.

What to Expect During a Dental Cleaning

Having your teeth cleaned professionally is painless and noninvasive. Anesthesia is not generally required, and the process is done fairly quickly depending on how much plaque and tartar has built up on your teeth.

Plaque and Tartar Removal

Tartar is a crusty film that can stain the teeth and cause discoloration. Tartar deposits form when the plaque from the surface of teeth is not removed completely. When minerals in the saliva combine with plaque, it will form crystals that harden into tartar.

Dental scaling is the name of the procedure that removes tartar buildup. The dentist or hygienist will either use a small hand tool with a hook on the end to scrape it off manually or use an ultrasonic instrument with a vibrating metal tip that chips tartar off the teeth.

Teeth Polishing

Next, a water spray is used to wash the tartar away from your teeth. Once that's complete, your dentist or hygienist will use a high-powered electric brush to apply a gritty toothpaste to your teeth for a deeper clean. The brush makes a grinding noise, but it isn't a painful process. The gritty toothpaste scrubs your teeth, gives them a good polish and deep clean.

Fluoride Treatment

This would be the last step of your dental cleaning —if you or your dentist decide you need it. A fluoride treatment protects your teeth, helping them fight off cavities for months afterward. It's applied directly to your teeth with a gel, foam or rinse.

What Are Some Eating and Drinking Recommendations After a Dental Cleaning?

Since you've just had your teeth professionally cleaned and polished, you'll want to be cautious of the foods and drinks you consume after your appointment. Sometimes, dental cleanings can cause your teeth and gums to be sensitive. If you've received a fluoride treatment, you'll want to give the fluoride a chance to bond to your teeth. You can always ask your dentist or hygienist what their post-cleaning guidelines are, as well.

How Long Until I Can Eat After a Dental Cleaning?

The answer to this question varies depending upon what type of treatments you received. If you got a fluoride treatment, you'll want to wait 30 minutes before you eat or drink anything. This gives the treatment time to fully soak into your teeth. If you did not receive a fluoride treatment, you can drink or eat right away.

What Foods Should I Be Cautious Of?

You should try and avoid sticky, acidic and spicy foods after this procedure because they can cause the fluoride treatment to wash away faster. Your teeth are also more prone to stains after a cleaning because your tooth enamel is more porous.

- Avoid chips, popcorn, nuts, dried fruits and chocolates — they can get stuck in your gums.
- Avoid foods or drinks that are high in acid — tomatoes, coffee, tea, soda, wine, pickles and fruit juices.
- Don't eat vegetables and fruits that can stain your teeth like red cabbage, beets and berries.
- Spicy and heavily seasoned foods may cause your mouth some discomfort after a cleaning — avoid curry, paprika and saffron.

Will Any Foods Make Me Uncomfortable or Cause Damage After a Cleaning?

Your next meal should be soft — just in case your teeth are sore or sensitive after a cleaning. Avoid any hard or gritty foods. If you're a smoker, wait six hours to light up since smoking stains the teeth, and your tooth enamel cuticle is porous for six hours after a cleaning which could increase the likelihood of staining.

Foods That Are Okay to Eat After a Cleaning

[There are plenty of nutritious foods](#) that don't require much chewing if your mouth is sensitive after a cleaning. Sometimes, hot and cold foods can affect your newly cleaned teeth, but these staples are recommended by the American Dental Association:

- Pureed or cream soups.
- Oatmeal or cream of wheat.
- Cottage cheese.
- Soft scrambled eggs.
- Plain yogurt.
- Smoothies or shakes.

- Mashed potatoes.

West Coast Dental Has You Covered

Dental cleanings twice a year can give you a sparkly smile, fresh breath and help in the early prevention and detection of oral health issues. Having tartar, plaque and stains removed from your teeth professionally is also important to your overall health. You might be hungry after your appointment, and it's okay to eat and drink after your cleaning — just be mindful of what you're consuming, and you'll be all set. The professionals at West Coast Dental are here to help you with convenient locations, online appointments and expert advice. [Schedule an appointment](#) with us today.

Sarah Carpenter is a freelance writer whose portfolio spans the industries of health care, higher education and entertainment. Find out more at [her website](#).

References

American Dental Association — [Your Top 9 Questions About Going to the Dentist - Answered!](#)

Cleveland Clinic — [Oral Hygiene](#)

Colgate — Soft Food Diet Options: [What To Eat After Dental Treatment](#)