



# Word of Mouth



## Do you overlook your teeth when considering diet?

Summer 2025

If so, you're not alone. New research has found that millions of people in the UK rarely consider their teeth when thinking about their diet.

An investigation by the Oral Health Foundation finds just 15% of UK adults see oral health as a concern when it comes to what they eat or drink. In contrast, nearly half (40%) worry about weight gain, over a third (35%) about heart health, and a similar number (34%) about diabetes.

This gap in awareness could be putting millions at risk of serious dental problems – and the charity behind the research is calling on us all to change the way we think about diet and oral health.

Dr Nigel Carter, CEO of the Oral Health Foundation, says "Every bite and sip affects your mouth. Sugary foods feed the bacteria that cause tooth decay. Acidic drinks wear away the protective enamel. Certain foods and drinks also stain teeth and can cause bad breath. These aren't just cosmetic issues – they can cause pain, infection, and even tooth loss."

Around 47 million UK adults experience tooth decay at some point in their lives, with 13.5 million currently living with untreated decay. Up to 26 million struggle with tooth staining, around 15 million show signs of enamel erosion, and a similar number suffer from bad breath.

**But the charity warns the risks go far beyond tooth decay and staining.**

Gum disease, which affects up to 90% of us during our lifetime, starts when bacteria build up under the gums,

causing inflammation and bleeding. If left untreated, it can lead to serious problems in other parts of the body.

Dr Carter adds: "Poor diet, especially high sugar intake, fuels these bacteria and increases the risk of gum disease.

"More importantly, gum disease is linked to serious conditions like heart disease, stroke, diabetes and respiratory disease. Other conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, pregnancy complications and chronic kidney disease are also linked to gum disease. When gums are inflamed, it can trigger inflammation in the rest of the body, raising

the risk of these illnesses."

The good news is that small changes can help. Cutting down on sugary and acidic drinks, choosing sugar-free snacks, reducing snacking, and eating a balanced diet rich in vitamins can protect teeth and gums.

Dr Carter says: "Your mouth is part of your whole body. Protecting your teeth means protecting your heart and your overall wellbeing. What you eat and how you care for your mouth matters."

**If it's been more than 12 months since your last dental examination, please get in touch.**

## FREE dental implant consultation

For passionate, dedicated, comforting implant care, look no further than Seaham Smiles.

Nigel Suggett, our principal dentist, has one of the best reputations amongst dentists who work with implants in the North East. He concentrates solely on implant dentistry and is passionate about it.

Patient satisfaction is what Nigel loves most. He enjoys spending lots of time with our patients whilst they are on this journey, getting to know them and building a relationship and then most of all, seeing the difference his work has on their confidence and lives.

He also thrives on combining art and science. Nigel's artistic skills focus on the fine details of implant dentistry, ensuring



the implant suits the person, fits seamlessly and looks natural. He is at the forefront of this advanced skill set and keeps up to date with the latest techniques.

Please contact us today to arrange your FREE initial implant consultation with Nigel and implant nurse Ellie (pictured).

# Spotlight: Sugar is not a harmless treat

"We must stop treating sugar like a harmless treat and start recognising it as a serious health threat. Labelling reform is just the beginning."

This is the stark message from Dr Nigel Carter, CEO of the Oral Health Foundation.

He said that people try to make healthier decisions but the information isn't clear enough. Sugar is everywhere – not just in sweets, but in cereals, sauces, yoghurts and ready meals – often hidden under misleading names.

"We need simple, honest labelling that makes sugar content impossible to miss. This is a matter of public health," he said.

Current food labelling rules allow manufacturers to obscure added sugars under technical or unfamiliar names like glucose, dextrose and maltose. Traffic light labelling, portion sizes and daily intake guidance remain underused – partly because the systems are inconsistent and overly complex.

Dr Carter warns that the system favours manufacturers over public health and is helping to fuel preventable conditions like tooth decay, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Research also reveals that people are far more likely to check labels on obvious sugary products like chocolate or biscuits, with nearly one-in-two (47%) saying they do so. But everyday items



that often contain hidden sugars are frequently overlooked.

The Oral Health Foundation says the UK needs a complete rethink on how food and drink products are labelled, with sugar given the same level of visibility and concern as fat or calories.

"We're calling for mandatory front-of-pack sugar warnings, clearer naming of added sugars, and government-led education on how to spot them," adds Dr Carter.

"Until then, millions of people will continue to consume more sugar than they realise – and pay the price with their health."

## Frequently asked diet questions

### What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay damages your teeth and leads to fillings or even extractions. Decay happens when sugar reacts with the bacteria in plaque. This forms the acids that attack the teeth and destroy the enamel. After this happens many times, the tooth enamel may break down, forming a hole or 'cavity' into the dentine. The tooth can then decay more quickly.

### Can food and drink cause erosion?

Acidic food and drinks can cause dental erosion - the gradual dissolving of the tooth enamel. Listed are the pH values of some food and drinks. The lower the pH number, the more acidic the product. Anything with a pH value lower than 5.5 may cause erosion. Mineral water (still) pH 7.6, milk pH 6.9, Cheddar cheese pH 5.9, lager pH 4.4, orange

juice pH 3.8, pickles pH 3.2, cola pH 2.5 and red wine pH 2.5.

### Can I eat snacks?

It is better for your teeth and general health if you eat 3 meals a day instead of having 7 to 10 snacks. If you do snack between meals, choose foods that do not contain sugar. Fruit does contain acids, which can erode your teeth if eaten in large quantities. Try not to have a lot of dried fruit as it is high in sugar. If you do eat fruit as a snack, try to eat something alkaline, such as cheese, afterwards.

And remember - eating and drinking foods containing sugar and acids naturally weaken tooth enamel. Brushing straight afterwards can cause tiny particles of enamel to be brushed away. It is best not to brush your teeth until **at least one hour** after eating.

## Practice news

### Speedy responses

We've made it even easier to get in touch with us! You can now reach us via Business WhatsApp for quick replies and added convenience. Save our number: 07467 322605

### Wedding belle!

A huge congratulations to our wonderful Practice Manager, Rebecca, on her recent marriage to Allan! The whole team celebrated at South Causey for what was a truly magical day – we all had an amazing time!

### Friendly reminder

In the last two months, **94 patients** did not attend their appointments. We kindly remind all patients of our Fail to Attend and Late Cancellation policy. This can be found on our website and within your treatment plans. If you'd like a copy or more information, please speak to a member of our team.

## Seaham Smiles Dental Surgery

2 Maureen Terrace  
Seaham  
SR7 7SN

0191 581 2236

### Opening hours

Monday	08.30 - 18:00
Tuesday	08.30 - 18.00
Wednesday	08.00 - 19.00
Thursday	08.00 - 19.00
Friday	08.00 - 16.00

[www.seahamsmiles.com](http://www.seahamsmiles.com)

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