



Vitamins make teeth stronger

CARROT is rich in vitamin A that builds strong teeth. Deficiency of vitamin A delays healing of mouth ulcers. Other sources include milk, chicken liver, green yellow colour fruit and vegetables like orange, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, papaya and mango.



FISH such as salmon, tuna and sardines are good sources of vitamin D which helps in the formation of teeth. Its deficiency can increase the risks of jaw fracture and periodontal diseases. Vegetarians may opt for mushrooms, fortified milk and egg yolk.



WHOLEGRAIN FOODS are rich in vitamin E that protects against cavity, plaque, tartar and gum problems. Sources include egg, milk, nuts, and green leafy vegetables. Also vegetable oils such as canola, corn, sunflower, soybean, and olive oil contain vit E.



SPINACH contains a good amount of vitamin K which helps in healing of mouth ulcers and other cuts in the oral cavity. Its deficiency may cause excessive bleeding after a tooth extraction or a dental procedure. It's also found in most green leafy vegetables, sprouts, broccoli, milk, eggs and beef.



Dental spa eases pain



That dreaded visit to your dentist may become obsolete soon, as spa dentistry promises to make dental treatment a smooth affair with music and complimentary spa packages. So while the dentist drills your teeth, you can tune into your favourite number through in-built music system in chairs. Also, you can choose to sit in an infrared chamber or get a warm massage before a dental procedure begins. This will relax and detoxify your body, relieving you of anxiety.

'My CHEEK BITING habit stopped me from enjoying food'

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By MONALISA DAS

Cheek biting has become a common dental problem in cities due to high anxiety level, misaligned teeth and odd chewing habits

ALL OF US bite our cheeks or tongue once in a while. But for some people this happens so frequently that medical intervention becomes inevitable, as in the case of 24-year-old Akanksha Mago who bore the brunt of painful cheek bites throughout her adolescence.

"I kept biting my cheeks. No matter how hard I tried to stop, I just couldn't control it," recalls Akanksha. Gradually the bites became ulcerated and the cheek tissues hardened. "I couldn't eat properly and spicy food became a dream," she says. Using mouth ulcer ointments didn't help, and the problem ultimately drove Akanksha to a dental clinic.

The dentist's verdict was that her misaligned teeth were to blame. "Akanksha's teeth had developed such that there was a mismatch between the arches of her upper and lower teeth. So the folds of her cheeks came between the upper and lower teeth when she was chewing or speaking, making them prone to bites," explains Dr Vishal Gupta, senior consultant, orthodontics, Medanta - The Medicity. Akanksha was prescribed some ulcer healing ointment and was made to wear customised braces for one and a half year to get her misaligned teeth corrected. "It was a painful phase, but after that the cheek biting problem completely subsided. It's been four years since I underwent treatment and the problem hasn't recurred so far," quips Akanksha.

PSYCHOSOMATIC FACTORS

EXPERTS say that of late this has become a common dental problem, especially in metros. There are many psychosomatic factors behind cheek biting, which is considered a kind of compulsive disorder. "It happens subconsciously and once an area is bitten, it becomes prone to repeated bites. I get patients who complain of cheek bites almost every alternate day," says senior orthodontist, Dr Rakesh Malhotra.

This problem is primarily attributed to the high stress levels. "Those with a nervous temperament or with high anxiety levels develop the habit of grinding their teeth even when they are asleep. This makes the cheek muscles and tongue prone to bites," says Dr Malhotra. In some people stress also causes continuous clenching of teeth, thus increasing the pressure on cheek muscles. "In chronic cases this constant pressure also leads to the wearing out of tooth enamel and cheek and tongue getting prone to bites," says Dr Shyam Garg, senior dental surgeon, Safdarjung Hospital.

Wisdom tooth eruption is another common reason for this problem. "Among many adults

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BITE YOUR CHEEKS OFTEN



TREATMENT DEPENDS UPON THE CAUSE

TOOTH EXTRACTION If it's the awkward positioning of the wisdom tooth that's troubling your cheeks, get it extracted.

BRACES In case of misaligned teeth that rub against your cheeks try orthodontics to correct the problem.

LASER TREATMENT If the problem is chronic, making cheek tissues hard due to frequent bites, you need to get soft tissue laser treatment.

ENAMELOPLASTY Go for it if your teeth are too sharp or have rough edges that cut into your cheeks. This includes recontouring the teeth to change their length, shape and surface.

NIGHT GUARDS These silicone guards are to be worn for upper and lower teeth separately. They block cheeks from coming in between them. Use them if you subconsciously bite your cheeks while sleeping.

the wisdom tooth grows outwards, cutting the cheek muscles. This becomes painful since one particular area of the cheek becomes susceptible to cuts," says Dr Priti Chhabra, consultant dental surgeon, Asian Institute of Medical Sciences.

"No wonder people aged between 20-30 years are most likely to develop this problem," she adds.

Misaligned teeth are another contributing factor, as happened with Akanksha. "Ideally the teeth should develop in a way so that the lower teeth fall inwards and upper teeth lie outwards when you close your mouth. But in some people it happens the other way round, making their cheek come in between," says Dr Garg.

The problem also erupts in those whose teeth are sharp and pointed, or have rough edges. Also, in case of a missing tooth, the adjoining teeth gradually get slanted in order to fill the gap. "This awkward shifting of adjoining teeth exposes the cheek to the pointed edges of teeth which keep rubbing against it," says Dr Garg. Moreover, those who eat fast, or eat with a distracted mind - such as talking or watching TV while eating - are at the risk of frequent cheek bites.

DON'T IGNORE IT

THE PROBLEM becomes grim among those who are addicted to chewing tobacco. "Those who chew *paan masala* or other forms of tobacco have a slow healing of ulcerated bites. The irritation persists longer and the bitten area is at the risk of further bites due to frequent

chewing habit," says Dr Garg.

This disorder calls for symptomatic treatment, depending on whether it's caused by local factors or stress factors. "Orthodontic intervention seems to be the answer to most local factors while stress factors call for psychiatric counselling," says Dr Manu Modi, director, Modi Dental Clinic. Also antioxidants and medications fasten the healing.

Timely intervention and complete treatment is a must. "Many times people stop the treatment midway once they get symptomatic relief. This is not good as the problem may relapse later," says Dr Modi. Also it's important to report the problem at the right time as chronic cheek biting may even lead to oral cancer. This problem also acts as an indication for some psychological disorders, depression or even medical problems like hypertension.

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Cheek biting needs to be checked at the right time or it may even lead to oral cancer