

## Three foods and drinks that can cause tooth staining, and how to still include them in your diet.

Have you heard that berries, coffees and teas, and tomato products can cause tooth staining over time? You might be curious how you can eat or drink these foods without as high of a risk of causing your teeth to discolour. These tips are suitable for people who have not had their teeth whitened recently, but for the general population who are looking to reduce future stains.

- Berries and other fruits

Blueberries, blackberries, and cranberries are some of the common berries consumed and enjoyed. Unfortunately, they can also lead to tooth staining over time. Berries are a source of the antioxidant anthocyanins, which is associated with heart health benefits including cardiovascular disease risk reduction, and overall reduced inflammatory response [\(1\)](#).

Try this when eating berries to reduce staining:

1. Try consuming berries with yoghurt, such as Greek yoghurt, for breakfast or snacks. This way you also get a calcium and vitamin D source, both of which are needed for tooth health.
2. If you do want to eat berries on their own, try to do this when you can follow-up with rinsing your mouth with water or mouthwash
3. Chew on some sugar-free chewing gum if you can't brush your teeth or rinse with water.

- Teas and coffees

The UK drinks a lot of tea and coffee, the average person drinking two cups per day. Tea and coffee are rich sources of tannins which can stain teeth due to the rich colour compounds.

Try these tips to reduce staining risk:

1. Drinking your tea or coffee in a shorter window rather than sipping over a longer time can help - this way you can drink and then rinse your mouth with mouthwash or water after drinking. This might mean sitting down mindfully to drink on a work break, rather than sipping half an hour at your desk while working.
2. Check in with how often you consume tea and coffee, and if you feel it's impacting your sleep. Caffeine intake past noon is associated with more difficulty falling asleep and less deep sleep. If you do decide that caffeine could be impacting your sleep quality, switch to lighter coloured decaffeinated teas, such as chamomile or fennel after noon.
3. Adding more milk or cream may reduce staining, so try to opt for a milky tea or coffee more often - which also gives you a higher calcium intake for general tooth health.

- Tomato products

Tomato soup, ketchup, chutneys, chopped tomatoes, pasta sauces; all make up a large proportion of the UKs diet. But, these foods can lead to tooth staining over time due to the

very bright red pigment called lycopene. Lycopene is associated with heart health, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and prostate and breast cancer [\(2\)](#), but sadly isn't great for teeth colour.

These options may be suitable, if you would like to swap tomato-based foods, or add foods in:

1. Try swapping a few tomato-based sauces with other options, such as mixing up using red pasta sauces for reduced sugar white sauces, such as carbonara, or using mayonnaise instead of ketchup sometimes.
2. Try switching up your lunch time soup from tomato to vegetable barley soup or leek and potato soup, this also increases your vegetable variety intake too, which is associated with improved gut health.
3. Serve a side of crunchy salad or vegetable sticks with your meal, such as carrots, celery, or apple to boost saliva production and act as a tooth scrubber [\(3\)](#).

## References

1. Kimble, R., Keane, K.M., Lodge, J.K., Howatson, G. (2019) Dietary intake of anthocyanins and risk of cardiovascular disease: A systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies. *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutri* 59(18): 3021-3034.
2. Przybylska, S. (2019) Lycopene - a bioactive carotenoid offering multiple health benefits: a review. *International Journal of Food Science & Technology* 55(1): 11-32.
3. The Centre for Pediatric Dental Care & Orthodontics. Foods that clean as you eat, blog entry. [Accessed 28/03/2021].