

# Dental myths Fact or fiction?

Caring for your teeth

July 2019

## Myth: Rinse your mouth after brushing

### The verdict? False

In the past we were told to rinse our mouths with water after brushing. However, rinsing with a non-fluoride mouthwash or plain water after brushing will wash away the active ingredients in the fluoride toothpaste that help to prevent tooth decay.

New guidelines recommend spitting out, not rinsing. This leaves a thin layer of the good stuff on your teeth where it will have the biggest benefit!



## Myth: Charcoal is a safe way to whiten your teeth

### The verdict? A bit of both...

Activated charcoal is industrially treated charcoal, commonly used to treat poisons that have been swallowed. It can absorb and neutralise toxins, allowing their removal from the gastrointestinal tract. It is suggested that charcoal can whiten teeth by absorbing stains.

There is a small amount of evidence that toothpaste containing activated charcoal may be effective at whitening teeth or reducing stains. Like many whitening products, they can be abrasive and should only be used for short periods. The charcoal can get lodged at the edges of fillings or in cracks in the teeth, leaving a stain behind.



#### Tips and advice:

- Never use homemade charcoal products as the charcoal is not activated and can be more abrasive
- Be careful if you have fillings on your front teeth as charcoal may cause an unattractive stain
- Whitening toothpastes have limited results and you may need to speak to your dentist about effective alternatives
- Your dentist can assess the cause of teeth staining.

## Myth: Oil pulling is good for your teeth and gums

### The verdict? A bit of both...

Oil pulling is a technique, based on Ayurvedic medicine, where oil is swished around the mouth and 'pulled' between the teeth for around 10–20 minutes. This is meant to reduce the levels of bacteria in the mouth.

Oil pulling has been studied as a cheap alternative for remote areas without access to commercial products. It has been effective in some small short-term studies; however, further research is needed.

#### Tips and advice:

- Oil pulling is safe and may have a similar effect to commercial mouthwashes
- It **does not** replace brushing and cleaning between teeth
- It takes a lot of time. It might be better to consider other healthy things to do with 20 minutes a day!



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References available  
on request. Contact  
[ask@adavb.org](mailto:ask@adavb.org)

Fact sheet available at  
[oralhealth.adavb.org](http://oralhealth.adavb.org)

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## Myth: Mouthwash is always good

### The verdict? False

Many people use mouthwash regularly. However, long-term use of some mouthwashes can have side effects including masking dental problems, gum irritation and changing the way we taste things. Mouthwash containing alcohol may potentially increase the risk of oral cancer.



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#### Tips and advice:

- Mouthwash may be prescribed by your dentist with higher strength fluoride or antibacterial agents if needed
- Brushing and cleaning between the teeth well is the best way to keep your teeth and gums healthy
- If you're using mouthwash to freshen your breath in between brushing your teeth morning and night, use sugar-free chewing gum instead.

## Myth: Babies leech calcium from their Mum's teeth

### The Verdict? False

This is based on the old wives' tale that during pregnancy a woman loses calcium in her teeth to the developing baby. A lot of people think women 'lose a tooth for every baby'.

Calcium is not taken from the teeth during pregnancy. If a mother's intake of calcium is too low, she will lose calcium from her bones.



#### Tips and advice:

- Other things can happen during pregnancy, such as frequent snacking, vomiting or reflux, which can increase the risk of tooth decay
- Hormonal changes during pregnancy can increase the risk of gum disease
- A healthy diet, good oral hygiene and regular dental care during pregnancy will help to reduce risks and maintain your teeth.

## Myth: Root canals can cause other health problems

### The Verdict? False

Root canal treatment is performed to save natural teeth damaged by decay or injury. It is used when teeth are infected or have a painful inflamed pulp, the soft tissue at the core of the tooth. Saving the tooth is often less expensive than replacing it, and allows ongoing chewing function and maintenance of appearance.

The myth that root canal treatment can cause other health issues has been around for a while, and is based on a debunked theory from the early 1900s. There is no sound evidence linking this treatment with the development of diseases elsewhere in the body.



#### Tips and advice:

- There is no need to avoid root canal treatment due to this myth
- If you have any concerns about whether root canal is the right treatment for you, speak to your dentist.

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