

# Three natural ways for a healthy smile

The rewards of maintaining good dental hygiene are more than just a set of pearly whites. They also help our overall well-being

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Oral health is one of the most important, yet, highly underrated part of our daily routine. For most of us, it is just a matter of brushing our teeth when we get up in the morning, while some others go a little further, and use flosses and mouthwashes to rinse and clean. But even then, some of us have oral health issues quite frequently. Some of the common complaints include, sensitive tooth, bad breath, soreness and bleeding of the gums, and weak and misaligned teeth among others. Gone are the days when senior citizens cracked nuts using their teeth. Experts hold the current food trends of junk food, increased consumption of sugar, and the use of excessive abrasive oral care products responsible for these problems.

"Our oral cavity is the first site in the process of digestion. It is also vulnerable to a variety of external assaults due to pollution and infection causing bacteria. Hence, better oral hygiene can have a great impact on your overall metabolism and immune response," says Dr Omkar Kulkarni (MD Ayurveda), head R&D department, Netsurf Network.

Kulkarni suggests the following helpful Ayurveda-based tips to maintain oral hygiene:

## BRUSHING

Chewing herbal sticks, especially with bitter, astringent and acrid taste, helps in causing attrition and levelling of biting surfaces. It also facilitates salivary secretion and helps in plaque control. Some of the herbs mentioned also exhibit potent antibacterial and anti-inflammatory actions. This in turn prevents caries formation and gets rid of bad breath.

Neem is one of the most commonly used herbal chewing sticks. You can also use fresh stems of liquorice (mulethi), black catechu (khair), Arjuna tree or fever nut (kantakareja) for brushing.

## TONGUE SCRAPING

The tongue is regarded as the 'mirror of the gut', as it reflects and impacts the overall process of digestion. Tongue scraping is one of the most important procedures for ideal oral hygiene, as well as for strong metabolism. Tongue scraping is proven to stimulate

reflex points on the tongue. It also enhances the taste perception and stimulates digestive enzyme secretion. According to Ayurveda, one should use metals such as gold, silver, copper or stainless steel for tongue-scraping. Clinical evidence has also shown that more than brushing, regular use of tongue scrapers reduces formation of anaerobic bacteria in the mouth and decreases bad breath.

## OIL PULLING

Oil pulling is considered the most useful method for all dental problems including sensitive teeth. As per Ayurveda, just like every other joint in the body, teeth also requires massage. Thus, it is a very important technique,

which involves swishing oil in the mouth for about five minutes after brushing and tongue scrapping. Oil pulling nourishes the teeth and gums, removes bacterial film that is difficult to be cleaned by mere brushing, and leaves a clean and pleasant feeling in the mouth. It is also used as one of the treatments in Ayurveda for about 30 diseases including diabetes and asthma as well as for headache and migraine, among other illnesses. It also helps reduce and prevent cracked lips, mouth sores and dental stains.

Those with sensitive teeth can use lukewarm black sesame oil, and those having issues such as bad breath and frequent sore mouth can use coconut oil for oil pulling.

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Oil pulling with coconut oil reduces bad breath (above); Chewing on herbal sticks such as neem stick controls plaque

