



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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This Holiday Season, Eat, Drink, and be Very Good to Your Teeth

While we all know that the holiday season can be tough on your wallet and your waistline, did you also know it can pose some danger to your gumline?

Holiday events and traditions, such as family and work parties, are often a big part of the end of the year. However, according to the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS), some aspects of this holiday season may not bring comfort and joy to your mouth and can actually cause injury to your teeth.

Enamel is the top layer of the tooth and is the hardest substance found in the body. The enamel is what protects the inner part of your tooth from injury. When enamel is weakened, your tooth can become more susceptible to problems, including cracking and breaking. Therefore, you may not want to take a “crack” at putting certain items in your mouth.

“Accidentally biting down on small, hard objects—such as ice cubes, pits, or food decorations—can cause a cracked tooth,” says Medford dentist and MDS member Kathryn I. Vitiello, DMD. “All of the biting force is concentrated on the small area of tooth that comes into contact with the hard object.”

Cracked teeth can also occur from bruxism. Bruxism, or teeth grinding, can often be a result of holiday stress. The force of the grinding usually occurs while sleeping, not making for a silent night. Physical symptoms can manifest themselves through sore facial muscles or jaw joints. The grinding can eventually lead to a cracked tooth if the force is great enough.

While many of us enjoy consuming seasonal holiday foods and drinks, use caution when being home for the holidays and eating or drinking anything overly acidic, sugary, or sticky. Acidic foods and drinks, such as citrus fruits and juices, wine, soft drinks, and sweetened mixed drinks, can actually cause enamel erosion over time. It is better to sip beverages through a straw

to minimize exposure of the acids to the tooth enamel. Also, try to avoid sticky toffees and candy, as they can loosen or even remove fillings and crowns. If you experience sensitivity to cold and/or sweetness, there are steps you can take to relieve the discomfort.

“Rinse your mouth with a mouthrinse containing fluoride,” says Dr. Vitiello. “Brush and then floss your teeth gently, but thoroughly. If the sensitivity continues, try a toothpaste designed to limit sensitivity.”

While giving and receiving holiday gifts can be enjoyable, they can also pose problems for your oral health. Many people use their teeth to cut through strings and tape, open packages, and remove tags from new clothing. Dr. Vitiello notes that these practices can cause your teeth to chip, crack, or even break. So always use a pair of scissors to open your child’s new toy or remove that tag from a new sweater—*never* use your teeth.

So how do you know if you have cracked or chipped a tooth? A cracked tooth is often not visible to the naked eye. You might experience pain when opening your mouth on the side where the crack is located, and the cracked tooth might have a lingering sensitivity to heat or cold. It is best to visit your dentist if you think you have cracked or broken a tooth or think you are experiencing bruxism. He or she is best able to diagnose and treat any issues you may have.

By following some simple guidelines, you can enjoy the most wonderful time of the year—with a bright, healthy smile.

For more information on your oral health, visit the Massachusetts Dental Society Web site at **www.massdental.org**.

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The Massachusetts Dental Society is a 5,000-member professional association and statewide constituent of the American Dental Association.