



# Sip smart. Protect your smile.



## How alcohol can impact your mouth.

It's not just your liver that's compromised by alcohol consumption. Your mouth can also be affected. For National Alcohol Awareness Month, let's dive into how alcohol impacts your smile and learn simple ways to improve your oral health and overall well-being.

### Drinking and your oral health risks<sup>1</sup>

Alcohol can reduce saliva production. And when saliva levels drop, plaque can stay on teeth longer. Over time, frequent or excessive alcohol use can increase the risk of oral health issues including:



Higher levels of plaque buildup



Greater risk of tooth loss—up to 3x more likely



Increased risk of oral cancer—alcohol misuse is the second-leading cause

### 5 ways to protect your teeth<sup>3</sup>

1. Sip lighter-colored drinks to limit your exposure to chromogens, which stain your teeth. Also, try to avoid chewing ice or adding citrus.
2. Brush, floss and use mouthwash after drinking alcohol (or any sugary beverage).
3. Drink water. It helps keep you hydrated and stop plaque build-up. Plus, most tap water contains fluoride.
4. Get a dental check-up twice per year. Your dentist can clean your teeth and catch any issues early.
5. Be honest about your alcohol consumption and talk to your doctor if you need support.

### Can alcohol cause cavities?

Drinking alcohol can increase the risk of cavities. The risk level is dependent on both the frequency and amount of alcohol intake. But as alcohol metabolizes into sugar, it can attract bacteria that then builds up and causes cavities.<sup>2</sup>



**Help is here if you need it.**

Learn about warning signs and where to find support for alcohol abuse at [FindTreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov)

1. Penn Dental Medicine. Alcohol and Oral Health: What You Need to Know, June 2023.

2. Healthline. How Alcohol Affects Your Dental Health, July 2024.

3. Penn Dental Medicine. Alcohol and Oral Health: What You Need to Know, June 2023.

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