

Good Nutrition ↔ Oral Health ↔ Mission Readiness



Soldiers who have oral health problems often have pain or difficulty chewing. Soldiers with chewing difficulties are less likely to eat balanced diets. This can result in poor nutrition and negatively affect mission readiness.

Poor nutrition can cause a breakdown in your oral health:

- Decreased intake of vitamins and minerals can lead to mouth sores, breakdown of your gums and oral cancer.
- A diet that is high in starch or sugar promotes tooth decay.
- Poor diet affects how well your immune system functions. It affects your ability to resist bacteria that cause gum disease.

Eat foods that provide the vitamins and minerals needed for good oral health.

Vitamins	Found in these foods	How it affects your mouth
Vitamin A (carotene)	Broccoli, brussell sprouts, green leafy vegetables (spinach, collards greens, kale, etc.)	Prevents dry mouth and oral cancer
Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)	Citrus fruits, cantaloupe, strawberries, green leafy vegetables, bell peppers	Prevents soft, bleeding gums, and loose teeth Prevents oral cancer
Vitamin D	Oily fish, milk, eggs, cereals, sunshine	Promotes strong teeth and jaw bones
Vitamin E	Vegetable oil, nuts, peanut butter, wheat germ	Prevents growth of thick white patches in the mouth (leukoplakia). Prevents oral cancer
B2, Niacin, B6, B12 Folic Acid	Salmon, beef, liver, chicken, fish, yogurt, nuts and beans Breakfast cereals, spinach, navy beans, orange juice, pasta, rice	Prevents soreness, redness and bleeding of the gums, cracking and sores in the corners of the mouth and on the tongue
Calcium Phosphorous Magnesium	Milk, cheese, yogurt, seafood, dark green leafy vegetables	Needed for tooth development, prevents loss of jaw bone and teeth, rebuilds hard surface of the teeth(enamel)
Fluoride	Fluoridated water, black tea, sardines	Prevents tooth decay, help repair enamel
Zinc	Liver, various meats, eggs, seafood, whole-grain cereals	Needed for digestion, healing cold and canker sores
Iodine	Iodized salt, seafood, kelp, saltwater fish	Needed for tooth development
Copper	Liver, kidney, seafood, nuts, seeds, tap water	Absorbs iron. Helps produce blood and nerve fibers
Iron	Liver, eggs, fish, seafood, various other meats, enriched breads & cereals, green leafy vegetables	Protects against oral cancer and helps the immune system
Potassium	Vegetables, legumes, fruits, milk, cheese, various meats, whole grains	Needed for nerve function and muscle contractions

Keep your mouth healthy so you can eat nutritious foods. Choose the right foods to protect or improve your oral health. Look at the fact sheet on Smart Snacking and Healthy Hydration for more information.

