

Something to chew on: the oral health benefits of sugarfree gum

WRIGLEY
Oral Healthcare
Programme



Our eating habits have changed in recent years – we are shifting to a ‘grazing’ culture, particularly in the UK.

Brits eat on average
6.7 times
a day, higher than the
European average.¹



Tooth decay

is the most widespread
noncommunicable
disease globally.²



Brushing twice daily with fluoridated toothpaste remains the single most effective preventive measure for ensuring good oral health.

However, it’s essential that oral hygiene policies and behaviours broaden and adapt to protect teeth when they are most prone to plaque acid attack.

As the NHS Long Term Plan looks to place a greater emphasis upon preventive measures, there is a growing base of evidence to support the recommendation of chewing sugarfree gum as an additional oral health measure.



The clinical evidence

A landmark systematic review conducted by world-leading researchers at King’s College London’s Faculty of Dentistry, Oral & Craniofacial Sciences found that **chewing sugarfree gum could significantly reduce the incidence of dental caries with a preventive fraction of 28%.³**



Chewing sugarfree gum after you’ve eaten stimulates the release of as much as **12 times more saliva** in the first few minutes. This helps to increase the rate of food debris clearance and maintain tooth mineralization.^{3,4}



These results suggest that **if just 10% of the world’s population chewed sugarfree gum** as recommended, it could **improve the incidence of dental caries for 79 million people.**



The important role of **chewing sugarfree gum** is widely recognised and accepted by experts around the world, including the World Dental Federation and the European Commission.

The economic benefits

Chewing sugarfree gum represents a simple and accessible intervention which can contribute to better oral health.

Dental diseases, including tooth decay, are largely preventable but still **cost the NHS in England £3.4 billion per year!**⁶



If all 12 year olds chewed sugarfree gum twice a day, **the NHS could save up to £3.3 million**, and this figure increases to **£8.2 million** if sugarfree gum is chewed three times a day.⁷

Oral health outcomes vary considerably across the country, with inequalities linked to socio-economic class, ethnicity and region.

Those from the most deprived backgrounds are **twice as likely** to be hospitalised for dental work than those that are better off.⁸

What do dental professionals think?

The Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme asked over 550 dental professionals their views on sugarfree gum⁸



agree with evidence that suggests sugarfree gum reduces dental caries



support the inclusion of sugarfree gum in the Public Health England Delivering Better Oral Health guidelines as an additional measure to improve oral health

It is important to explore new preventive strategies to supplement existing interventions in reducing the risk of dental caries and improving oral health for people around the world.

About the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme

The Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme partners with dental professionals and dental health associations across the UK, helping to improve patients' oral health through one additional simple and enjoyable step in their daily routine: chewing sugarfree gum after eating and drinking on-the-go.

For over 30 years, the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme has supported independent research into the benefits of chewing gum including saliva stimulation, plaque acid neutralization, tooth strengthening and the health economic benefits of chewing sugarfree gum. This research helps policy-makers, dental professionals and consumers understand the role of sugarfree gum as a convenient and effective tool for everyday oral care.

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8. The Health Foundation and Nuffield Trust (2017): Root causes- Quality and inequality in dental health. Available online from: https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/files/2018-10/1540139783_qualitywatch-root-causes-dental-health-report.pdf (Last accessed on 08/11/19).
9. The Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme surveyed over 550 subscribers to its website on their views on sugarfree gum on 13/12/20.