

Apple cider vinegar: Is drinking this popular home remedy bad for your teeth? A dentist explains

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Apple cider vinegar is said to help with weight loss, heart health, managing cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Credit: Shutterstock/VasiliyBudarin

Apple cider vinegar has become a popular home remedy in recent years

and has been used for centuries in cooking and medicine. It's thought to help with a [wide range of health issues](#), including high cholesterol, blood sugar levels, obesity and high blood pressure. It's also said to help with [eczema](#) and [stomach acid reflux](#), but this has not been scientifically proven.

Because [apple cider vinegar](#) is a good [source of nutrients](#) like potassium, magnesium, calcium, and vitamin C, it's believed to be good for your body as a whole. Apple cider vinegar is usually consumed with foods as an additive to sauces, salad dressings and marinades.

Some people also [drink apple cider vinegar](#), diluted in hot or [cold water](#). Pills, tablets, powders and gummies also exist. Diluted apple cider vinegar can also be used externally in baths, wet wraps or hair rinses. But because of the lack of research about apple cider vinegar, there are no official dosage suggestions to date.

Research has shown that apple cider vinegar has both antimicrobial and antioxidant effects—including [anti-oral biofilm effects](#). Oral biofilms, also known as [dental plaque](#), consists of a sticky layer of bacteria on tooth surfaces. This means that in theory, it may be able to reduce plaque levels on our teeth, but there have been no [clinical studies](#) to test this.

Apart from a lack of evidence, there is another important reason why apple cider vinegar is probably not the best option to reduce plaque: like [other kinds of vinegar](#), it's high in acid, and studies indicate that it may cause [erosion](#) to our [bodily tissues](#) if not diluted. This includes the [soft tissues](#) in our mouth as well as our [teeth](#) and [tooth enamel](#).

Teeth and acids

Enamel is the [mineralised material](#) that coats our teeth and is the hardest tissue in the human body. Enamel covers the crown which is the part of

the tooth that is visible in the mouth. However, the main portion of the tooth is dentin, which is located underneath our enamel. Dentin is also a hard tissue, similar to bone, and has a [direct connection](#) to the dental pulp in the center of our teeth, containing nerves and blood vessels.

The enamel helps protect our teeth from chewing, biting, hot and [cold temperatures](#), and potentially damaging chemicals. Some chemicals though, like acids, can still damage the enamel over time, if they get in contact with our teeth for longer periods. [Acids are able to dissolve](#) and soften the minerals in our enamel, potentially making it thinner over time. This is especially the case if we brush our teeth or chew hard foods directly after an acid attack, which can accelerate [enamel loss](#).

When enamel [erodes due to vinegar acids](#), our teeth may become more sensitive. This means they react more to hot or cold foods, drinks, and sweets since the dentin layer underneath the enamel is much more sensitive due to a direct connection to the nerves inside our teeth. In some more advanced cases, when the enamel has been completely eroded by acids, the dentin is exposed and unprotected, and at this stage, the teeth will erode, and wear and tear a lot faster.

What to do

[Dentists can recognize this issue](#) by looking at the shape and color of the teeth, by asking about sensitive teeth and by taking a diet history of patients to identify foods and drinks containing acids. Though when it comes to false teeth, some dentists have actually been recommending soaking acrylic dentures in [diluted vinegar](#) due to its [antifungal properties](#) and its ability to dissolve calcified plaque deposits (tartar).

That said, a thin layer of proteins and slime from our saliva will [form a layer on our enamel](#), which can help to protect it from acids. Also, our saliva has many minerals, [which are able to re-mineralise](#) the outer layers

of damaged [enamel](#), but this takes time—usually [several hours](#). Fluorides in toothpaste and mouthwashes will also [strengthen the outer enamel layers](#).

So if you do regularly drink apple cider vinegar and want to avoid tooth erosion, it's best to follow a few rules. Always water down apple cider vinegar and consider drinking it through a straw to protect your teeth. It also helps to consume apple cider vinegar together with your main meals, to reduce the number of acid attacks per day.

Avoid apple cider vinegar products that require lots of chewing (like acidic gummies). And do not brush your teeth directly before or after drinking apple cider vinegar. Instead, wait for about half an hour. When you brush, be gentle (not too abrasive), use fluoridated toothpaste, and do not use a hard toothbrush. To find out whether it's safe for your [teeth](#) to use [apple cider vinegar](#), you can also speak to your dentist about your risk of developing tooth erosion.

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