

TULSA WORLD

SCENE

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Wright On



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It's amazing my teeth don't look like a prison extra in a Dickensian miniseries on PBS.

My love for certain foods - especially diet soda, soy sauce and coffee - are no-nos for keeping a bright smile, as an email from Dr. Timothy Chase reminded.

Chase is a practicing partner in SmilesNY, a leading cosmetic dentistry practice in New York City. As a 15-year veteran of cosmetic dentistry, he maintains that a healthy smile, white teeth and healthy gums can take 10 years off your appearance. That got my attention.

"Not only does a healthy smile make you look and feel better, but dental health issues have been linked to systemic problems like heart and kidney issues and low birth weight in babies," Chase said.

Certain foods help to remove bacteria that cause plaque, which hardens into a yellowish tartar if not brushed away soon enough, Chase said.

Crunchy fruits and vegetables work best because they function as an abrasive scrub for your teeth. They also stimulate the production of saliva, which helps to keep plaque from forming. Eat things like apples, cauliflower, carrots and celery.

Strawberries and oranges are useful for polishing teeth. Rubbing an orange peel or a strawberry over your teeth, followed by washing out your mouth with water will get you noticeably whiter teeth after a few months.

Dairy products such as yogurt, milk and cheese contain a lactic acid, which may help protect teeth against decay. Hard cheeses are best for whitening because they help remove food particles.

It's important to avoid stain-causing foods and substances as much as possible, Chase said. A simple rule is any food that causes a stubborn laundry stain can stain teeth.