



Newsletter Articles

Drilling down on dental health: The Tradie's Brekky.



Drilling down on dental health

The Tradie's Brekky. By Brittany Kidd and Donna McMahon from Teaching Teeth - Oral Health Therapists

It's time to unpack the 'tradie's brekky' and why you might want to rethink your choices to help keep your teeth. Picture this tradies: It's 6am, you are off to the job site, and you roll through the servo for fuel, a feed and a few heart-starters to kick off the day. The typical 'breakfast of champions' involves some or all the following: We're talking, Meat pies, traveller spec, luke-warm from the hot box with sauce. Iced coffee - the bigger, the better of course! Cans of energy drinks - just to get you through the day Cigarettes and or Vapes The quintessential tradie's brekky.

But let's explore the effects of such an Aussie tradition. It's as bad for your teeth as it is your waistline. Before we give you a hard time about your questionable choices, we also acknowledge that tradies burn more energy in a day than us soft-handed office types. Physical and technical work, often in hot and dusty environments, takes its toll. So, while we salute your nation-building skills and efforts, we don't want you to end up with stumpy teeth and a mouth full of holes by the time you are 40.

Between your work, your jetski and your sportsbet account (I think we've ticked off all the stereotypes) there is still some room for health awareness. First up, the good old meat pie. A beloved staple in the tradie diet and well, everyone in Australia, really. These convenient, delicious handheld parcels, packed full of savoury fillings and flaky pastry, can actually increase your risk of gum disease. Crazy I know! I feel betrayed too. The processed meats and high saturated fat content in meat pies can cause inflammation in your gums, leading to gingivitis and periodontal disease. Plus, the high amount of carbohydrates found in the pastry can lead to decay. The carbohydrates break down into sugars, ready for the bacteria to feast on which starts the decay process.

Now, let's wash down that meaty information with an oversized, refreshing iced coffee. Unsurprisingly, iced coffee contains caffeine and most contain loads and loads of added sugar. Caffeine can cause a decrease in saliva, which leads to a dry mouth. Now saliva acts as a buffer for acids, and has protective factors against the bad bacteria, so a dry mouth is a big deal. This, along with the high sugar contents, turns your mouth into a perfect environment for those bacteria to flourish, leading to decay. Overall, drinking iced coffee is like Christmas for bad bacteria. However, it does contain milk and calcium so even though it isn't a great choice, it is still better than soft drinks, sports drinks, and energy drinks. Sipping on energy drinks might give you wings, but it's a dental nightmare in disguise. That can of energy drink is pretty much the worst combination of tooth destroying ingredients you can get, sugar, acids and caffeine. We've mentioned the caffeine, and everyone knows about sugar and teeth, so we won't bore you anymore with them. But did you know about acids and their affects on teeth? Well, the acids present in energy drinks, like citric acid and phosphoric acid, lower the pH levels of your mouth. Over time, this relentless acid attack weakens the enamel, leaving your teeth susceptible to decay and erosion of the tooth structure, which can make your teeth super sensitive.

Hitting that Vape? Cigarettes and Vapes are the final ingredient in the tradie's breakfast. This one is no joke. Smoking and vaping need no introduction when it comes to negative health effects. It is detrimental to overall health and is known to cause dental problems too. It is known to cause gum diseases, like periodontal disease. It weakens your immune system, leading to more bad bacteria. It causes a dry mouth, staining on your teeth and bad breath and is a major contributor to oral

cancer. If there is one ingredient in this trifecta you should give up immediately, it's the cigarette and/or vape.

While the tradie's brekky may be a quick and convenient choice for busy mornings (and just downright delicious), it isn't doing your dental health any favours, or your waistline. These morning habits might seem like harmless delights, but they can take a toll on your teeth over time. Next time you pull up at the servo before work, you might want to consider swapping that meat pie and ice coffee for a healthier option. Also, time to butt out the butt. Your smile will thank you and you will be on your way to tip-top dental health. Speaking of Tip Top, a freshly made sandwich would be a better option than the meat pie. A regular coffee without sugar (extra shot though, of course) and a 2L bottle of water would also do the job nicely. By making these small adjustments, you can continue your morning delights while keeping your own natural teeth. The right tools for the trade!

Iwasaki, M., Manz, M.C., Moynihan, P., Yoshihara, A., Muramatsu, K., Watanabe, R. and Miyazaki, H., 2011. Relationship between saturated fatty acids and periodontal disease. *Journal of dental research*, 90(7), pp.861-867.. doi: 10.1177/0022034511405384