Oil pulling ? Does it work? [1]

Dear Alice,

I just recently heard of oil pulling where someone swishes oil in their mouth for 10 minutes and it is supposed to remove bacteria in a person's mouth, preventing cavities, etc. Does this work?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Moving oil around may not be just for oil companies! Oil pulling is the process of swishing olive or vegetable oil in the mouth for 10 to 20 minutes at a time, and although there has been a recent surge of interest in this oral care method, it is old in practice. Also known as Kavala Graha or Kavala Gendhoosa, it's an Ayruvedic (ancient traditional Indian) therapy, which has been used to promote gum and tooth health as well as treat oral disease.

Some studies have been done which show that oil pulling can decrease plaque, gingivitis, halitosis (bad breath), as well as lower the count of certain bacteria that could lead to tooth decay. However, these studies also had small numbers of participants. The efficacy of oil pulling could be due to several reasons: it could be that some mouth-residing bacteria or small molecules are more soluble in oil than in water. So, as you swish oil in your mouth, the particles dissolve into the oil and are easily spit out. Or, it could be that the mechanical act of swishing almost any liquid in your mouth for an extended period of time could help loosen particles and plaque from your teeth. Finally, it has also been speculated that swishing the oil forms a type of barrier on the teeth that protect them from acid erosion.

While the studies seem promising, there are several tried-and-true ways to prevent cavities, gum disease, and maintain oral health! Brushing your teeth twice a day with a fluoride-containing toothpaste, flossing daily, replacing your tooth brush every three to four months, and keeping regular appointments with your dentist are all recommended for keeping your pearly whites sparkling and your mouth fresh. If you do choose to incorporate oil pulling into your oral care regime, consider making it an addition to these oral hygienic practices instead of a substitute for them. You might also talk to your dentist about their thoughts on oil pulling and if it's appropriate for you. If a mouthwash is what you are looking for, check out What should I look for in mouthwash? [2] for more parameters to consider when choosing a mouthwash product.
Hope this gives you something to smile about!

Alice!
Category:
General Health [3]
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