

Mouthrinses or Mouthwashes



1. Why use a mouthrinse?

- Daily oral hygiene practice should include brushing with toothpaste, flossing, and rinsing with a mouthwash.
- The mouthrinse reaches between the teeth, where the toothbrush cannot get to.
- It also disinfects all the oral tissues, including the tongue.

2. What does a mouthrinse do?

- Similar claims are made for mouthrinses as for toothpastes:
 - They freshen the mouth and protect the teeth from decay.
 - Breath freshening is a feature of all mouthrinses.
 - Most mouthrinses contain fluoride to prevent decay.
 - Some mouthrinses claim to have antibacterial and antiseptic properties.
 - Treatment for sensitive teeth is included in many mouthrinses.
 - The instructions and age restrictions listed on the container should be strictly adhered to.

3. What are the main ingredients and properties of conventional mouthrinses?

- Peroxide.
 - This is an antiseptic which is used to treat mouth ulcers and gingivitis with bleeding gums.
 - It should only be used for a limited time.
- Chlorohexidine.
 - This is an antibacterial and antiviral medication.
 - It is used to treat gingivitis.
 - Chlorohexidine may leave stains on the teeth, but the dentist can remove them (see Staining of Teeth).
 - Chlorohexidine is safe to use for a short time.
- Fluoride
 - Fluoride mouthrinses can reduce and prevent tooth decay and gum disease.
- Potassium chloride
 - This chemical is used to desensitise teeth.
- Triclosan
 - Triclosan is an antibacterial ingredient, and is also used in many toothpastes.

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4. Should I swallow the mouthrinse?

- No. Mouthrinses are not to be swallowed. However, it doesn't matter if you swallow some by mistake.
- Peroxide and chlorohexidine are not safe to swallow. They are safe for rinsing only.
- The regular use and spitting out of a fluoride mouthwash is perfectly safe.
- Excessive doses of fluoride can cause **fluorosis** or can even be toxic.

5. What do the alternative or herbal mouthrinses contain?

- Herbs, essential oils and other natural products are the main ingredients of alternative products.
- The ingredients are claimed to have many beneficial effects:
 - Aloe Vera has a soothing effect.
 - Vitamin K strengthens teeth.
 - Tee tree oil is an antibacterial and antiviral ingredient.
 - Grapefruit seed extract has antiseptic and antibacterial properties.
 - Echinacea is anti-inflammatory and antiviral.
 - Goldenseal claims to be anti-inflammatory and antiviral. It is also an antibiotic.
 - Peppermint oil and menthol are added for fresh, natural flavour.