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Dental Digest

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Sugar & Spice Are Not So Nice...But Pumpkin Is!

It probably comes as no surprise that the Pumpkin Spice Latte is Starbucks' most popular seasonal drink of all time. Everything about the pumpkin's color, aroma, and savory flavor screams fall! Every year coffee enthusiasts eagerly await the release of this highly anticipated beverage, then flock to the coffee shop as soon as it becomes available. At least that is how it has gone for the better part of the last 15 years, since its inception in 2003.

But the Pumpkin Spice Latte isn't your average cup o' joe. Recently, the beloved libation has come under fire for the large amount of calories (380) and sugar (50g) it contains. Health and fitness professionals are urging people to consume it like they would any other dessert: in moderation. And while most health professionals are worried about the damage the Pumpkin Spice Latte can do to people's waistlines, dentists are more concerned with the impact it could have on their patients' teeth.

The bad news is that any way you look at it, the amount of sugar in your beloved Pumpkin Spice Latte, along with the length of time you spend sipping it down, is a recipe for tooth decay. The good news is that you can still satisfy your autumnal craving for pumpkin goodness by preparing and consuming it in different, delicious, healthier ways—and actually improve your dental and overall health while doing it!

Health benefits related to consuming pumpkin are plentiful. This vitamin-packed fruit can please both your nutrition/fitness professional and your dentist by protecting your teeth and whole health. Pumpkin provides:

- **Zinc:** Zinc is your mouth's best friend. It plays a key role in healing wounds, which does wonders for damaged soft tissues inside your mouth, or gums that are healing from gingivitis—induced bleeding. Zinc is also considered an anti-plaque agent and is added to toothpaste to prevent buildup.
- **Vitamin A** Vitamin A aids in the flow of saliva, which is key for washing bacteria from the mouth. It also plays a key role in healing soft tissues.
- **Vitamin C:** Vitamin C is key for maintaining a healthy immune system and fighting off infections. It's good for your mouth and your overall health.
- **Magnesium:** Magnesium and calcium work together to create strong, protective enamel that can resist decay. Without the proper amount of Magnesium in your diet, your enamel becomes soft and susceptible to cavities.
- **Fiber:** Pumpkins are packed with fiber, which is important for maintaining excellent overall health. Fiber helps with weight control, and fiber-rich foods help stimulate the flow of saliva (your best natural defense against tooth decay).

If you are looking for a way to get your pumpkin fix in this season while keeping your teeth and physique fit, minimize or eliminate the sugar. Consider replacing your daily spiced latte with these healthy pumpkin preparations:

Pumpkin Seeds: From the store or straight from the gourd, these baked snacks are packed with flavor and good-for-your-teeth vitamins. They are easy to prepare and pack for lunch or an in-between-meal snack.

Pumpkin Smoothie: Incorporate canned pumpkin into your breakfast or workout smoothie. It pairs well with coconut milk and almond butter. Throw in some spice and maple syrup and your morning meal will be transformed into a healthy liquid version of the traditional pumpkin pie.

Baked Pumpkin: You can make a very tasty meal out of pumpkin by simply baking it with cinnamon and adding a little bit of butter. Pumpkin works as the main course but is also perfect as a side dish.

Pumpkin Seed Oil: One easy way to enjoy the health benefits that pumpkin has to offer is by incorporating pumpkin seed oil into your cooking. It adds a nutty seasonal taste to whatever dish you are preparing and is perfect for keeping you in that seasonal holiday mood.

Being dedicated to your physical and dental health doesn't mean swearing off the Pumpkin Spice Latte for good. It just means taming your daily addiction and satisfying your pumpkin craving with snacks and dishes that are low in sugar and high in vitamin-rich goodness. Check out our Tooth Healthy Pumpkin Spice Latte Recipe below!

Call Turman Dental today and check up on your oral health. This is the perfect time to talk to Dr. Turman to find out more about how you protect your oral health through the holiday season.



TOOTH HEALTHY PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE RECIPE

Total Time: 5-10 Minutes | Serves 1-2

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup coconut or almond milk (unsweetened)
- 2 tablespoons pumpkin puree
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1/4 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup brewed coffee or espresso

DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat the coconut or almond milk in a small pot or tea kettle.
2. Add the milk and remaining ingredients to a blender, blending until well-combined.
3. Pour into a mug and sprinkle extra pumpkin pie spice, if desired.
4. Serve and enjoy!