

[Home](#)[News](#)[Sport](#)[Weather](#)[Shop](#)[Reel](#)[Travel](#)[M](#)

Health

Charcoal toothpastes 'don't whiten teeth'

10 May 2019



GETTY IMAGES

Charcoal-based toothpastes, which claim to whiten teeth, are a "marketing gimmick" which could increase the risk of tooth decay and staining, says a review in the British Dental Journal.

The charcoal products, which are increasingly popular, often contain no fluoride to help protect the teeth.

And there is no scientific evidence to back up the claims they make, the authors say.

Excessive brushing with them can do more harm than good, they add.

They advise people to go to their dentist for advice on bleaching, or whitening, their teeth.

And they say it is better to stick to using a regular fluoride-based toothpaste.

- **NHS dentist charges rise by 5% in England**
- **'Misleading' toothpaste TV advert banned by watchdog**

Charcoal was first used for oral hygiene purposes in ancient Greece, as a way of removing stains from teeth and disguising unpleasant odours from diseased gums.

Celebrity effect

Dr Joseph Greenwall-Cohen, co-author of the study from the University of Manchester Dental School, said "more and more shops are selling charcoal-based toothpastes and powders", including Superdrug, Boots and Tesco, after celebrities had started talking about using them.

But he said the claims they made had been found to be unproven by a 2017 US review of 50 products.

Some said they were "anti-bacterial" or "anti-fungal", that they helped with "tooth whitening" and would "reduce tooth decay".



The review said people were brushing regularly with the charcoal-based products in the hope that they would offer "a low cost, quick-fix, tooth-whitening option".

But too much brushing could lead to tooth wear and more sensitive teeth and, with few of the products containing fluoride or making the ingredient inactive, any protection from tooth decay was limited, it said.

'Don't believe the hype'

"When used too often in people with fillings, it can get into them and become difficult to get out," Dr Greenwall-Cohen said.

"Charcoal particles can also get caught up in the gums and irritate them."

He said charcoal toothpastes and powders were more abrasive than regular toothpastes, potentially posing a risk to the enamel and gums.

The charcoal contained in today's toothpastes is usually a fine powder form of treated charcoal, the review says.

Charcoal can be made from materials including nutshells, coconut husks, bamboo and peat, and possibly wood and coal.

Prof Damien Walmsley, from the British Dental Association, said: "Charcoal-based toothpastes offer no silver bullets for anyone seeking a perfect smile, and come with real risks attached.

"So don't believe the hype. Anyone concerned about staining or discoloured teeth that can't be shifted by a change in diet, or improvements to their oral hygiene, should see their dentist."

[View comments](#)

Related Topics

Dentistry

Share this story About sharing

More on this story

NHS dentist charges rise by 5% in England

1 April 2019

'Misleading' Colgate toothpaste TV advert banned by watchdog

19 December 2018

Related Internet links

British Dental Journal

British Dental Bleaching Society

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external Internet sites

More Videos from the BBC

Recommended by Outbrain



Magician disappears in river after Houdini trick



Sheep graze the roof at green sports centre



'Happiness doesn't come from your weight'

The 'mental pressure' of being a farmer

'He never backs Britain and should never be PM'

'Serious issues raised by Spotlight'

Elsewhere on BBC

Recommended by Outbrain

BBC News

'Go anywhere' driver gets stuck on beach

BBC Culture

Emily Eavis interview: Glastonbury 'is the best it's been'

BBC News

Export ban placed on 'grotesque' crab

BBC Culture

How Asif Kapadia became the great chronicler of tragic fame

BBC News

Evidence of human life found on seabed

BBC Travel

The German island battling the sea

From Around the Web

Promoted content by Outbrain |

Most Daring Gowns at the 2019 Oscars

Family Mindex

Travelers Rank 25 Rudest Countries (USA Ranks Where?)

ALOT Trave

Overhyped, Overrated Tourist Traps to Avoid at All Costs

ALOT Trave

Wife Reads Out Husband's Affair Texts Instead Of Vows At Wedding

CelebsPulse

[Gallery] Couple Makes A Bet: No Eating Out, No Cheat Meals, No Alcohol. A Year After, This Is What They Look Like

CelebsPulse

Auckland: Could You Be Eligible For These Fantastic New Hearing Aids?

Clinic Compare

Top Stories

Democratic divisions laid bare in feisty TV debate

Candidates sparred on healthcare and immigration, and underdogs grabbed the limelight with zingers.

1 hour ago

Australian student missing in North Korea

1 hour ago

European countries set new June heat records

9 hours ago

ADVERTISEMENT

Features



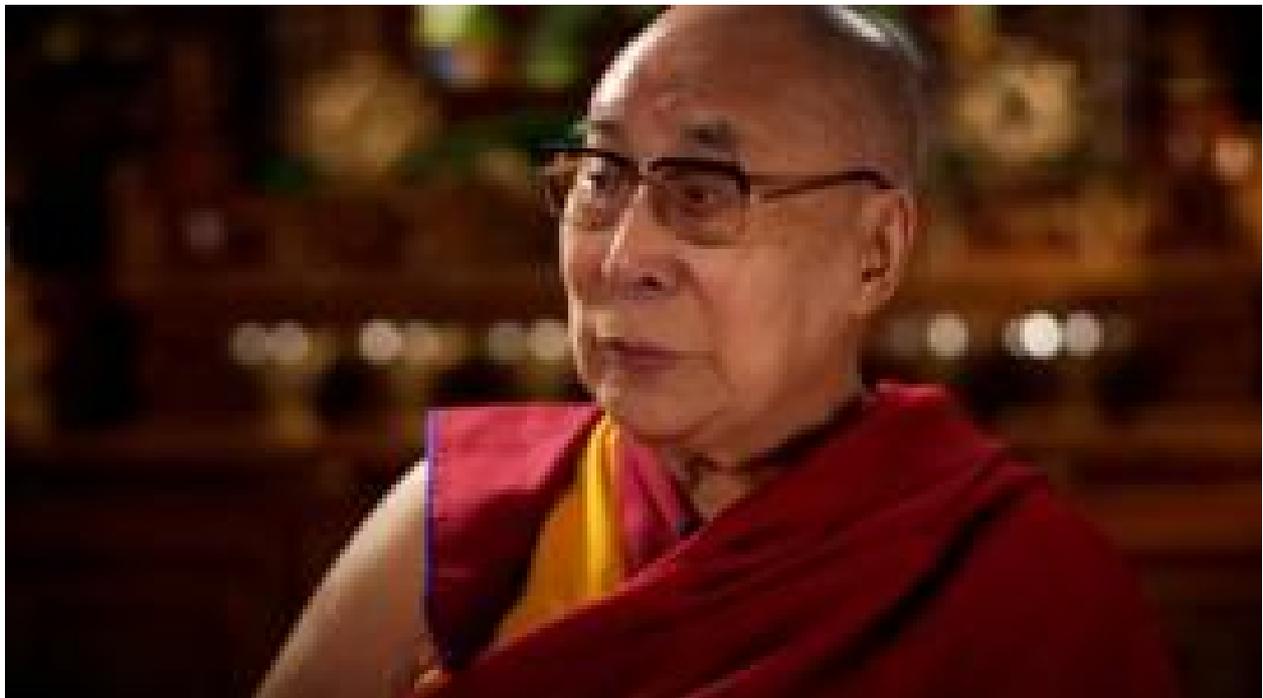
The football match that



The tropical islands that fell into ruin



Who shone in first Democratic debate?



Dalai Lama: Trump lacks moral principle



Why Europe's heatwave is so unusual



Appeals over Russia holiday camp deaths



You're not safe in Georgia, Russia tells its citizens



The country which could see the next revolution



Witchcraft: Why it's important to me

Elsewhere on the BBC

Lyrics quiz

Have you been getting these songs wrong?

Feeling hot

What happens to your body in extreme heat?

Most Read

Boeing suffers new 737 Max issue that could delay return	1
US election 2020: Democratic divisions laid bare in feisty TV debate	2
Newspaper headlines: Immigration promise and TV licence 'revolt'	3
European countries set new June heat records amid heatwave	4
Shepherd's Bush stabbing: Teenager dies	5
Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt unveil new pledges in leadership race	6
Jeremy Hunt's tax plans 'could cost up to £65bn'	7
Madagascar stadium crush kills 16 during national celebrations	8
The tropical islands that fell into ruin	9
Trust 'undermined' by food delivery firms over hygiene	10

ADVERTISEMENT

i Why you can trust BBC News

BBC News Services

On your mobile

On your connected tv

Get news alerts

Contact BBC News

Explore the BBC

Home

Sport

Shop

Travel

Culture

Sounds

CBeebies

Bitesize

Taster

Local

Radio

News

Weather

Reel

Capital

Future

CBBC

Food

Arts

Nature

TV

Three

[Terms of Use](#)

[About the BBC](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookies](#)

[Accessibility Help](#)

[Parental Guidance](#)

[Contact the BBC](#)

[Get Personalised Newsletters](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Ad choices](#)

Copyright © 2019 BBC. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. **Read about our approach to external linking.**