Beyond Oral Health what are the Benefits of Chewing Gum

Chewing gum is extremely popular. Most health professionals and others consider it to improve oral health. Yet large gaps remain in our understanding of its benefits in other areas.

Study

The practice of chewing gum is apparently ancient. Natural resins were chewed as far back as ancient Egypt and the Mayan era. The modern form of chewing gum arose in the 19th century, as chicle (natural latex from the sapodilla tree) became the key ingredient.

Chewing gum is simply a gum, or “insoluble, non-nutritive colloidal system that is inert and indigestible," flavored and often sweetened to increase enjoyment. It keeps the mouth moist by promoting salivation; prevents caries, especially when it contains non-fermentable sugars like xylitol; reduces the severity of conditions like bad breath; and has non-oral health applications.

For instance, people trying to quit smoking chew nicotine gum to reduce tobacco craving. Post-operative patients chew it to get their intestinal movements going again. Athletes chew it to increase their performance. Others use it to reduce anxiety, increase alertness, and regulate their appetite.

Chewing gum is cheap and easily available, and because it is not a medicine, it is well tolerated by most patients. If its health benefits are confirmed, this could make it a useful public health tool. The current mapping review aims to consolidate available knowledge on chewing gum's uses other than oral health, while showing gaps that need to be addressed in future research.

The researchers used data from five databases, selecting them via carefully refined searches. The type of gum, the type of outcome, and the study design were all used to stratify the type of study, and the evidence gaps were identified.

Results

The final study included 260 studies examining the use of various types of chewing gum, including sugar-containing gum, sugar-free gum with or without xylitol, caffeinated gum, nicotine-containing gum, other bioactive compounds, and others that were not explicitly described. Of these, 155 were randomized controlled trials (RCTs), 36 were non-RCTs, 65 were reviews or meta-analyses, and 6 were surveys.

Geographically, most records originated from the USA (34) and China (32), followed by the UK (26) and Turkey (26). Most studies were published between 2015 and 2025, with 38 published in 2024

alone. The authors noted that the 2025 data were only partial, covering publications up to July 20th.

The results presented three main applications of chewing gum. First, it made people feel better and perform more efficiently. For instance, it might enhance sports performance or mental processing. Others used it to reduce anxiety and relieve stress or stabilize their mood. Some people used gum to control their metabolism.

Wellbeing and Performance

Most sports-related studies reported on caffeinated chewing gum, indicating its link with performance enhancement. This type of gum reduces tiredness, increasing the duration of play. Moreover, it improves endurance and strength, while shortening reaction time.

Medical Aid

Secondly, chewing gum was used as a medical aid. Of the 40 studies assessing this role, 14 looked at its role as a smoking cessation aid, especially the nicotine-containing gum. It is also valuable as a smoking cessation tool, especially in encouraging compliance with replacement strategies over time, which is closely linked to long-term quitting. Interestingly, nicotine gum is established as a quitting aid all by itself. However, other nicotine delivery systems like skin patches or electronic cigarettes have also been explored for their potential use in combination with it.

Other applications in this category include relieving thirst in individuals with medically restricted fluid intake, such as during hemodialysis or congestive heart failure. Its use for comfort during childbirth, managing glucose levels in pregnant women with diabetes, pain relief, and managing gut disease were also explored. Two studies examined ear, nose, and throat (ENT) disorders, one studied cognition in Alzheimer's, one looked at attention in ADHD, and one examined cardiac disorders.

Conclusion

Chewing gum is often used to improve performance and well-being, help people quit tobacco smoking, and accelerate post-operative recovery. Further well-designed studies are required to map the applications of chewing gum in improving the health and well-being of older adults and children.

Source:

https://www.news-medical.net/news/20250829/What-are-the-benefits-of-chewing-gum-beyond-oral-health.aspx