Patients sometimes ask: Does the food you eat influence the amount of hard deposit that forms on the tooth? I'm interested in your thoughts.

I get this question too. I'm not sure if diet affects calculus, but studies have shown that one's pH level of saliva has an influence. Those that are more neutral tend to have greater calculus formation, but low caries incidence and those with lower pH have little calculus, but greater caries incidence. Xerostomia and open-mouth night breathing also influence calculus build-up. I would think that a high-acid diet or a more bland diet could have an affect on build-up as well. Make sense?

I always get asked if taking a calcium supplement increases build-up. Or if drinking hard tap water with a lot of minerals will increase calculus. I have never seen any actual research done, so I don't know how to answer these questions confidently.

In hygiene school we had a family visit our clinic; they were originally from India. They all had heavy staining and moderate to heavy tenacious calculus. Also, I have talked with other people who have had patients from India and their stories were similar to ours. In my opinion, diet probably has some effect on calculus formation.

I've noticed that when a female increases the dosage of calcium supplements or starts taking pre-natal vitamins, there is generally an increase in calculus. Anyone else experience this with patients?

One of my bosses indicated she saw changes with the Atkins high-protein diet. She saw a huge increase in calculus in those patients.

I tell my patients that every one of us has our own unique body chemistry and that is what accounts for some of the calculus build-up in their mouths. I explain that the difference could be compared to hard vs. soft water. The hard water has more minerals dissolved in it, similar to some people's saliva.