

Healthy snacking tips from your pediatric dentist

We all want to keep our children's teeth healthy and cavity-free! Although brushing, flossing and dental check-ups are the main building blocks of healthy smile, the influence of diet is often underestimated. A poor diet high in sugar and acids may place your child at extra risk for tooth decay. Sugar on teeth supplies food for bacteria, which produce acid that eats away tooth enamel. On the other hand, a healthy balanced diet can support proper tooth development, strengthen enamel and fight tooth decay.

Here are some helpful "bites" of information to prevent tooth decay!

The number of times per day and the length of time your child's teeth are exposed to sugar are more important to control than the actual quantity of sugar. Limit in-between meal snacking and finish snacks in one sitting.

Children age 1 to 6 should consume no more than 4 to 6 ounces of fruit juice per day, from a cup (not a bottle or sippy cup). Soda and other sugary drinks should be infrequent treats.

Sugary drinks can be made safer by drinking them with a straw to reduce their

contact with teeth. Foods high in sugar can be made safer by consuming them with a meal. Drink water, brush or chew sugar-free gum after enjoying a snack.

Sticky foods such as raisins, dried fruit and toffee are not easily washed away by saliva, and are poor choices for snacks.

Many multivitamins contain the same ingredients as candy. Choose a sugar-free vitamin or give your child the vitamins at bedtime immediately before brushing.

Fruit and vegetables are important sources of nutrients for dental health. Fruits like oranges and strawberries are high in vitamin C, which can help strengthen gums and prevent gingivitis. Vegetables like carrots and broccoli require longer chewing and naturally clean the teeth by scrubbing away plaque.

Dairy products neutralize harmful acids in the mouth and provide protein and calcium, which can strengthen teeth and prevent the erosion of enamel.

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