



HEALTHY EATING HABITS FOR CHILDREN

Healthy food is good for both general health and oral health. Nutrients from healthy foods help your child fight cavities and keep gums healthy.

SUGARS

Sugars are one of the main causes of cavities in children's teeth and are found in many foods. Foods high in sugar include soft drinks, chocolate bars, pastries and baked goods. Ingredients such as corn syrup, dextrose, fructose-glucose, honey, maple syrup, molasses and sucrose are all different types of sugars. Even many healthy foods such as milk, juice, bread, cereal and pasta contain some sugars and can be just as damaging as other foods high in sugar if left in the mouth for a long time.

When your child eats or drinks foods containing sugars, bacteria in the mouth mix with sugars to make a mild acid. This acid attacks the hard outer layer of the tooth (called the enamel) and can eventually cause a cavity in the tooth. The damage caused by sugars depends on how much and how often they are eaten, when they are eaten, and how long they stay in your child's mouth. The longer and more often sugars touch your child's teeth, the more damage they can do.

ACIDS

The acid found in some foods and drinks can also be harmful to your child's teeth. When we consume foods or drinks high in acid, the acids may play a part in causing dental erosion. Dental erosion is when the hard part of your tooth wears away from direct contact with acid.

Foods and drinks high in acid include carbonated soft drinks, sports drinks, citrus fruits and vinegary foods such as pickles. This includes both sweetened and unsweetened foods and drinks. Avoid these especially when snacking. Teach your child not to swish or hold drinks high in acid in the mouth for a long time.

The good news is that the saliva helps to protect teeth from this damaging acid. During a meal, our mouths produce a great deal of saliva. This saliva protects our teeth by neutralizing the acids produced by sugars. But between meals, our mouths do not produce as much saliva and the sugar stays on our teeth longer. So eating between meals without brushing can be damaging to your child's teeth and can cause oral health problems.



SMART SNACKING FOR KIDS

While snacking can cause oral health problems, growing children need healthy snacks to keep them going between meals. Here are some snack tips to help keep your child's teeth healthy:

- Limit the number of times a day your child eats or drinks sugars.
- Avoid sugary treats that stay in the mouth for a long time like hard candy or lollipops.
- Stay away from soft, sticky sweets that get stuck in your child's teeth.
- Sweets are best served at the end of mealtime while there is still plenty of saliva in your child's mouth to wash away the sugars.
- Drinks like juice and milk are best served during or at the end of mealtime. Water is the best drink to have between meals.
- Between meals, serve snacks that will not harm your child's teeth, like vegetables, cheese, nuts and seeds.

