



Snack and Sip All Day? Risk Decay!

Do you feel empty-handed without a soft drink to sip on during the day? Do you use breath mints or eat candy frequently throughout the day? Instead of eating meals, do you snack all day? After a workout, do you have a sports drink to recover?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be increasing your chances of tooth decay.

What and how often you eat can affect your teeth

Eating habits and food choices can lead to tooth decay. A steady diet of sugary foods and drinks, including sports drinks, can damage teeth. But snacking throughout the day or “grazing” can also lead to tooth decay.

Plaque is a sticky film of bacteria. When you do not remove plaque from your teeth daily, it builds up. Plaque bacteria uses sugar to produce acids that attack enamel, the hard surface of the tooth. This acid attacks tooth enamel for up to 20 minutes after you eat or drink. When you have sugary foods or drinks many times a day or sip on the same sugary drink for long periods of time, the acid attacks your tooth enamel again and again. Repeated acid attacks cause tooth decay, which requires treatment by a dentist.

One way of making smarter choices is to read the labels of the foods and beverages you have to make sure they are low in sugar.

Nutrition and tooth decay affect people of all ages

Almost all foods have some type of sugar. You cannot and should not remove all sugar from your diet. Many foods and drinks, like apples, carrots and milk, are naturally sweet and have vitamins and nutrients that your body needs. Eating a balanced diet helps keep you from feeling tired, getting sick, being overweight, and having other health problems, like tooth decay.

The guidelines of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) describe a healthy diet as one that:

- Is based on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars.

Reduce your risk of tooth decay

- If you have sugary foods and drinks, have them with meals. Saliva increases during meals and helps neutralize acid and rinse food particles from the mouth.
- Limit sugary drinks and snacks between meals. Remember, many sports drinks have sugar too.
- If you do snack, choose foods that are low in sugar.
- Chew sugarless gum that has the ADA Seal. Chewing gum for 20 minutes after meals has been shown to reduce tooth decay. It does this because increased saliva flow helps wash out food and neutralize acid.
- Drink water.
- Brush your teeth two times a day with a fluoride toothpaste. Clean between your teeth with floss once a day. Use dental products that have the ADA Seal of Acceptance.
- See your dentist regularly.

Please contact the office if you have any questions or concerns!

www.childrensdentistnh.com

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