



Healthy Eating Advice



Why is a healthy diet important?

A balanced diet that includes plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit and is high in vitamins and minerals helps to prevent gum disease, as well as being good for your overall health.

Every time you eat or drink anything sugary, your teeth are under acid attack. The sugar reacts with the bacteria in your mouth, creating harmful acids which attack tooth enamel.

Acidic foods and drinks can be just as harmful.

Dietary advice to help prevent tooth decay.

The frequency and amounts of sugar should be reduced and ideally restricted to meal times.

Three meals a day is better than 7 to 10 snacks. If you need to snack between meals, choose foods that don't contain sugar and are not acidic, such as:

- Cheese
- Raw vegetables
- Nuts
- Breadsticks



It is not the amount of sugar you eat or drink, but how often you do it that is important. If you eat sweet foods, try to keep them to mealtimes.

Avoid food and drinks with added sugars.

Most sugars in the diet are contained in processed and manufactured foods and drinks, for example:

- Chocolate and sweets
- Cakes and biscuits
- Buns, pastries, pies and puddings
- Sugared breakfast cereals
- Jams, honey, tomato sauce
- Ice cream, syrup and sweet sauces
- Fresh fruit juices, soft drinks

The higher up sugar appears in the list of ingredients, the more sugar there is in the product. Always read the list of ingredients on the labels when you are food shopping. Remember that 'no added sugar' does not necessarily mean that the product is sugar free. Sugars may be listed as 'carbohydrates'. Ask our dental team if you are unsure what this means.

A high sugar diet can contribute to a range of other health problems including heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

Tooth brushing:

Major dental conditions of caries (holes) and periodontal (gum) disease can both be reduced by regular effective tooth brushing with a fluoride toothpaste.

- Brush **twice** daily, last thing before bed and at least one other time each day
- A **fluoride toothpaste** should be used relative to the person's age
- It is recommended that you should use no more than a pea-sized amount of toothpaste
- Children under 3 years should use **no** more than a smear of toothpaste
- Children must be helped or supervised by an adult when brushing until at least 7 years old
- Rinsing with lots of water after brushing should be discouraged. It reduces the benefit of the fluoride within the toothpaste. Spitting out excess toothpaste is preferred.
- It is best not to brush your teeth until at least one hour after eating. Eating and drinking weakens the enamel on your teeth and brushing straight afterwards can cause tiny particles of enamel to be brushed away.
- It is especially important to brush before bed. This is because the flow of saliva, which is the mouth's own cleaning system, slows down during the night and this leaves the mouth more at risk from decay.

Chewing gum makes your mouth produce more saliva, which helps to cancel out the acid in your mouth after eating or drinking. It has been proven that using **sugar-free chewing gum** after meals can prevent tooth decay. However, it is important to use only sugar-free gum, as ordinary chewing gum contains sugar and therefore may damage your teeth.

Further advice can be found on the **British Dental Health Foundation** website www.dentalhealth.org

