

HEALTHY DIET. HEALTHY MOUTH. HEALTHY YOU.

Quick little tips to keep you smiling big.

What you eat may not only affect your general health; it may also affect the health of your mouth. And one of the biggest dangers is tooth decay, which is caused by plaque (a sticky film of bacteria that naturally forms on your teeth) and the food you eat. The bacteria in plaque feeds on sugar and starches found in your food. This forms an acid that attacks your tooth enamel, causing tooth decay.

Here are some tips to avoid tooth decay:

- ▶ **Snack smart.** If you need a snack, grab some fruit, vegetables or whole grains. Try to avoid hard candy, mints and sticky sweets that stay in your mouth for a long time. They may taste sweet, but they can cause tooth decay.
- ▶ **Drink plenty of water.** Drinking water can help wash away food and acid, especially after eating.
- ▶ **Limit sugar and starch.** Remember, sugary and starchy foods can lead to tooth decay, so try to limit them. Also, try nibbling on cheddar, Monterey jack or Swiss cheese after you eat. It increases the amount of saliva in your mouth, which helps fight tooth decay.
- ▶ **Don't use your teeth as tools.** Avoid chewing hard things like ice or popcorn kernels that could wear down or break your teeth.
- ▶ **Don't smoke or use tobacco.** Both can lead to gum disease, or worse – oral cancer.¹
- ▶ **Use fluoride toothpaste.** Brush your teeth at least twice a day – and always at bedtime. Replace your soft-bristled brush every three to four months or whenever it starts to look frayed.

- ▶ **Floss daily.** It's very important to add flossing to your routine because a toothbrush can't reach in between your teeth where tartar and plaque can form.
- ▶ **Visit your dentist.** Make regular trips to the dentist to help reduce tartar buildup. While you're there, ask your dentist if you're brushing and flossing the right way.

The sour truth about America's sweet tooth²

- ▶ Soft drinks, sodas, fruit juices and sport drinks represent the single largest source of sugar consumption in the US.
- ▶ Half of the U.S. population consumes a sugar-sweetened beverage on any given day.
- ▶ On average, children get 13-17% – and adults almost 12% – of their calorie intake from added sugars (excluding free sugars from fruit juices).

1. American Cancer Society. "Health Risks of Smokeless Tobacco", November 2015. <<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/tobaccocancer/smokeless-tobacco>>

2. Moynihan, Paula. "How Diet Impacts Dental and General Health," Dear Doctor Dentistry and Oral Health. November 2015 <<http://www.deardocor.com/articles/nutrition-and-oral-health/page2.php>>

Together, all the way.®



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