

Family Friendly Factsheets!

Dental Disasters



We all know that sugary foods are bad for our teeth. This is because bacteria feed on the sugar from our food and drink. The bacteria live in the sticky, yellow plaque that builds up on teeth. When teeth aren't brushed frequently to remove the plaque, or if sugar is eaten too often, the bacteria produce acid which attack and soften the enamel surface of teeth. Once the surface has been damaged the teeth are more likely to suffer decay (called 'caries'). It's not just sugary foods that cause the erosion of teeth – acidic foods and drinks can also lead to problems.

Sweet tooth

So how can you help your child to avoid sugary and acidic foods? One of the main culprits of tooth erosion is fizzy drinks. All fizzy drinks, fruit juices and cordials are acidic – even 'diet' drinks and fizzy water – and most are also very sugary. But don't panic, we're not suggesting you ban these completely...encouraging your child to eat a healthy, balanced diet is not just important for overall good health, it's also really important for good long-term dental health too.

Check it

Always check labels on food and drinks – the list of ingredients has the biggest first. (By the way, sugar might also be called sucrose, glucose or fructose.) Look for the 'Carbohydrates (of which sugars)' figure in the nutrition information panel - 10g sugars or more per 100g (or 100ml) is A LOT of sugar. 2g sugars or less per 100g (or 100ml)

is A LITTLE sugar. You can reduce sugar by swapping to the 'Light' or 'Tooth-friendly' varieties of your child's favourite cordial or fizzy drink but remember that they still contain very few beneficial nutrients, so milk, water and milkshakes without added sugar are much healthier choices.

Cut it out

Cutting down on fizzy drinks and keeping fruit juices and cordials for mealtimes will help prevent tooth decay. Don't encourage sucking sweets slowly and making sugary drinks last for ages because it gives the sugar more time to do its damage. Don't forget the importance of brushing teeth regularly, too. This stops the plaque from building up and means the occasional treat won't become a dental disaster!

Stay strong

Try following these guidelines to keep your child's teeth strong:

- Cut down on fizzy and sugary drinks, and only drink them at mealtimes
- Stick to milk and water between meals
- Avoid snacking – or choose healthier snacks such as fruit, vegetables, toast or crumpets
- Brush teeth carefully twice a day

For more information on how to avoid dental disasters, visit

www.eatwell.gov.uk

www.3dmouth.org