

SNACK AND SIP ALL DAY?

RISK DECAY!



Americans are consuming foods and drinks high in sugar more often and in larger portions than ever before. It's clear that "junk" foods and drinks gradually have replaced nutritious foods and beverages for many people. The average teenage boy drinks 81 gallons of soft drinks per year. The average teenage girl drinks 61 gallons. Alarmingly, a steady diet of sugary foods and drinks, including sports drinks, can ruin teeth, especially among those who snack throughout the day. Common activities may be contributing to the tendency toward tooth decay. These include "grazing" habitually on foods with minimal nutritional value, and frequently sipping on sugary drinks.

- Do you feel empty-handed without a sweetened beverage to sip on during the day?
- Are you in the habit of popping candy into your mouth several times a day?
- Do you often skip regular meals and boost your energy with a few snacks instead?

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

Sugar mixed with the bacteria in your mouth produces acid. This acid attacks your enamel for up to 20 minutes after the sugar is in contact with your tooth. When sugar is consumed over and over again, the harmful effects on teeth can be dramatic. When a tooth decays, the enamel does not grow back. The only option once decay has occurred is to see your dentist to have the tooth treated.

EATING HABITS

Eating patterns and food choices are important factors that affect tooth decay. Almost all foods have some type of sugar that cannot and should not be eliminated from our diets. Many of them, such as apples, oranges and milk, contain important nutrients and add enjoyment to eating. Without a balanced diet, however, health problems including obesity, nutrient deficiencies, and tooth decay can result. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has updated the food pyramid, called MyPyramid. It has a central message of "Steps to a Healthier You."

The USDA's Dietary Guidelines describes a healthy diet as one that:

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



One way of making more informed choices is to check the labels of the foods and beverages you consume.

You can learn more about the USDA's nutrition recommendations at: www.mypyramid.gov.

SNACK AND SIP ALL DAY RISK DECAY (CONT...)

The following table lists the approximate amount of sugar and acid in popular soft drinks. Remember, even if there is no sugar, the acid can still erode the tooth enamel.

	ACID*	SUGAR**
Pure Water	7.00 (neutral)	0.0
Barq's	4.61	10.7 tsp.
Diet Barq's	4.55	0.0
Diet 7Up	3.67	0.0
Sprite	3.42	9.0 tsp.
Diet Dr. Pepper	3.41	0.0
Diet Coke	3.39	0.0
Diet Mountain Dew	3.22	11.0tsp.
Grape Minute Made Soda	3.29	11.9tsp.
Mountain Dew	3.22	11.0tsp.
Fresca	3.20	0.0
Orange Slice	3.12	11.9tsp.
Diet Pepsi	3.05	0.0
Nestea	3.04	5.0tsp.
Gatorade	2.95	3.3tsp.
Dr. Pepper	2.92	9.5tsp.
Hawaiian Fruit Punch	2.82	10.2tsp.
Orange Minute Made Soda	2.80	11.2tsp.
Coke Classic	2.53	9.3tsp.
Pepsi	2.49	9.8tsp.
Battery Acid	1.0 (ouch)	0.0

*Laboratory Tests, University of Minnesota School of Dentistry, 2000 **USDA: 4.2 grams = 1 teaspoon sugar

REDUCE YOUR RISK OF TOOTH DECAY

- If you consume sugary foods and drinks, do so with meals. Saliva increases during meals and helps neutralize acid production and rinse food particles from the mouth.
- Limit between-meal snacks and sugary beverages. If you are hungry, choose nutritious foods that don't promote tooth decay. Examples of these foods are string cheese, nuts, and vegetables. If you chew gum, choose sugarless gum containing Xylitol. Sugarless gum increases saliva flow and helps wash out food and neutralize decay-producing acids.
- Drink water. Consuming optimally fluoridated water can help prevent tooth decay. If you choose bottled water, check the label for the fluoride content.
- Brush your teeth twice daily with a fluoridated toothpaste and floss daily.
- Visit your dentist regularly.

*Some information obtained from the American Dental Association.

