



Tooth-Friendly Food and Drinks

There are some general principals of healthy eating and drinking that apply to everybody, regardless of age.

Most people think that sweets and lollies are the only foods to blame for tooth decay (and they are the main culprits). But, bacteria not only use the sugar in sweets to create acid they can also use any food that contains sugars and other carbohydrates – foods like pasta, fruit, potato chips and snack bars.

It's not practical to cut out these foods completely but if you can cut down on them and don't snack in-between meals it gives your teeth a much better chance of staying healthy.

Healthy Eating for Babies and Toddlers

Follow these simple tips and your baby will have the best chance of avoiding tooth decay in their baby teeth and then in their permanent teeth.

- Don't settle your child to sleep with a breastfeed or a bottle of milk, soft drink or fruit juice. If they like to suck on something, give them a dummy or a bottle of water.
- If your baby has a feed before bed, gently wipe down their gums or teeth with a clean, moistened cloth before putting them to bed.
- Avoid giving your baby or toddler frequent snacks. Stick to their main meals.

- Start phasing out breast and bottle feeding from 12 months of age.
- Even healthy foods like bread, pasta, crackers and milk (including breast milk) contain high amounts of sugar this is why it's important to make sure you clean your child's teeth and gums morning and night.

Healthy Eating for Older Kids

The main thing to remember with older kids is that they often like to eat a lot of sweets and fizzy drinks and they often snack on them throughout the day which means their teeth are under constant attack.

Although it will be difficult at first, the best way to put this right is to get them to only eat at main meal times and encourage them to eat foods from the 'healthy' list below if they do need a snack during the day.

Healthy Eating for Adults

Adults are often just as guilty of bad eating habits as kids. We eat sugary foods and drinks and we graze on snacks during the day between meals which means our teeth are under constant attack from acid.

Like kids, we should aim to eat the 'healthy' food alternatives listed below and limit snacking during the day.

To help combat the effects of acid attack on our teeth, chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva which will help to neutralise acid, get rid of food debris and coat your teeth with a protective film. Eating cheese will also stimulate saliva.

Foods that cause tooth decay

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|-----------------|--------------------------|
| ✗ Lollies | ✗ Savoury crackers |
| ✗ Soft drinks | ✗ Popcorn |
| ✗ Cordials | ✗ Fruit snack bars |
| ✗ Sports drinks | ✗ Muesli bars |
| ✗ Fruit juices | ✗ Sweet biscuits |
| ✗ Peanut butter | ✗ Some breakfast cereals |
| ✗ Potato chips | ✗ Dried fruit |

Tooth-friendly foods

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| ✓ Milk | ✓ Wholegrain cereals |
| ✓ Some cheeses | ✓ Lean meats |
| ✓ Fruits and vegetables | ✓ Tap water |
| ✓ Nuts | |

Professional Resources

For more information on oral health and looking after your mouth, visit www.dentalhealthweek.com.au

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