

How Eating Candy and Other Sweets Affects Your Smile



WHY ARE CANDY AND OTHER SWEETS BAD FOR MY TEETH?

Candy and other sweets have sugar in them. Sugar causes tooth decay (cavities) by creating acid when it comes into contact with plaque. The acid destroys your tooth enamel.



WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY TEETH FROM SUGAR?

Limit how much sugar you eat. Children should eat no more than 12 grams (3 teaspoons) of sugar each day and adults should eat no more than 50 grams (12.5 teaspoons) of sugar a day. To limit how much sugar you eat, read the nutrition facts so you know how much sugar is in food. Look for ingredients that end in “-ose,” such as fructose or glucose. Also look for these ingredients (all of them have a lot of sugar):

- Corn sweetener
- Dextrin
- Cane juice
- Honey
- Corn syrup
- Syrup
- Molasses



Limit or avoid foods that are high in sugar. These include:

- Soft drinks
- Energy drinks
- Sports drinks
- Fruit juices
- Sweet tea
- Cakes and pies
- Ice cream
- Candy
- Cookies
- Pastries
- Cereal

Talk to your doctor or a registered dietitian. They can tell you more about foods to avoid.



WHAT CAN I DO TO SATISFY MY SUGAR CRAVINGS?

If you must have sugar, you can:

- Eat fruits. Even though fruits have some sugar, they also have other nutrients that are good for your teeth.
- Use sugar substitutes, such as Splenda, Equal, and Sunett. They may look and taste like sugar but they do not cause tooth decay like sugar does.
- Try chocolate, if you must have candy. Chocolate is better than other kinds of candy because it washes off your teeth easier. Dark chocolate is best because it has less sugar.
- Eat sugary foods only with a meal. Foods that are eaten as part of a meal cause less harm to your teeth than if you ate the sugary food by itself. This is because more saliva (spit) is made, which helps wash away the sugar that causes tooth decay.



WHAT CAN I DO TO LIMIT THE EFFECTS OF SUGAR ON MY TEETH?

- Brush your teeth 2 times each day. But if you eat or drink something with sugar, try to wait at least 1 hour before you brush your teeth. If you brush right after you drink or eat food with sugar, it can cause tiny particles of enamel to be brushed away.
- Floss (clean between your teeth) at least 1 time each day.
- Drink plenty of water. Drink tap water instead of bottled water. Tap water is more likely to have fluoride in it.
- Chew sugar-free gum. When you chew gum it helps your mouth make saliva. This can help remove the sugar that causes tooth decay.
- Limit the number of snacks you eat. When you eat food as a meal, it causes less harm to your teeth if you eat a lot of snacks each day. This is because more saliva is made, which helps wash away the sugar that causes tooth decay. If you do have a snack, make sure it is something healthy such as vegetables or low fat dairy.
- Visit your dentist 2 times each year (every 6 months).

Summary

The main things you can do to support good oral health (teeth, gums, and tongue) in yourself and others:



- Protect your teeth from sugar.
- Limit or avoid sugary foods and drinks.
- Brush your teeth 2 times each day.
- Floss your teeth at least 1 time each day.
- Visit your dentist 2 times each year (every 6 months).
- Teach others how to use good oral health habits.



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