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For the smiles of your life.

Best Foods For Your Teeth

Everyone knows that regular brushing and flossing are essential for good oral health, but did you know that eating the right foods is equally important? Starchy or sugary foods feed plaque, which can wreak havoc in your mouth. The presence of plaque, a thin, invisible film of sticky bacteria and other materials covering the surfaces of the teeth, leads to tooth decay. While some foods bring on tooth decay, others fight it. Here are some foods to seek out and some to avoid.

Fruit

Fruit is great for your teeth especially when eaten in whole, raw form. Firm or crunchy fruits, such as apples and pears and vegetables, have a high water content; this dilutes the effects of the sugars they contain and promotes the flow of saliva, helping to protect against decay by washing away food particles and buffering acid. Choose fruits rich in Vitamin C. Citrus fruits, tomatoes, and lemons – all acidic foods - should be eaten as part of a larger meal to minimize the acid they contain.

Vegetables

Vegetables, such as broccoli, carrots, and sweet potatoes (along with pumpkin, a fruit), are rich in Vitamin A from which tooth enamel forms. Eating raw vegetables will provide more Vitamin A, plus clean teeth and massage gums. Onions contain anti-bacterial sulphur compounds, which kill the bacteria that harm your teeth and gums, and celery induces the production of more saliva to neutralize cavity-causing bacteria.

Dairy

Dairy products like milk and yogurt are low in acidity and sugar. Milk is rich in calcium, which means you are fortifying teeth and bones as well. Cheese is high in phosphate and calcium, balances the pH in your mouth, produces more saliva, rebuilds tooth enamel and kills the bacteria that cause tooth cavities and gum disease.

Proteins

Proteins like beef, chicken, eggs and turkey are rich in phosphorus, which combines with calcium and Vitamin D to produce our teeth and bones.

Beverages

Beverage-wise, water, milk and unsweetened tea are your best choices. Rinsing with water cleans the mouth, allowing saliva to nourish teeth, hydrate gums, and help wash away trapped food particles that can create plaque. Fluoridated water can help prevent tooth decay. Limit soft drinks, lemonade, and coffee or tea with added sugar. Sipping sugary beverages throughout the day exposes teeth continually to sugar and the inherent decay-causing acids. Green and black teas contain polyphenols, which can help keep bacteria at bay.

Sweets

Candies (lollipops, hard candies, mints), cookies, cakes, pies, breads, muffins, potato chips, pretzels, French fries, bananas, raisins, and other dried fruits contain large amounts of sugar and/or can stick to teeth, encouraging bacteria to grow. Cough drops should be used sparingly as well. Chocolate is actually the better choice of sweets as its sugars are coated in fat so it slips easily out of the mouth. Chewing sugarless gum is okay. It loosens food that becomes stuck to teeth and increases saliva flow with cuts down on mouth acids. Be careful, however, if you have problems with your jaw.

Sugar Substitutes and Sugar-Free Products

Sugar substitutes don't encourage bacteria growth in the mouth and don't create decay-causing acids. However, sugarless or sugar-free food may still contain other natural sweeteners, such as honey, molasses, evaporated cane sugar, fructose, barley malt, or rice syrup. These natural sweeteners can be just as harmful to teeth. Examine the

ingredients label to see if the sugarless or sugar-free foods contain natural sweeteners. Words ending in '-ose' (like sucrose and fructose) tend to include a natural sweetener.

Proper Teeth and Gum Care

As always, it's important to brush your teeth regularly (at least twice a day), use toothpaste that contains fluoride, and floss and use a mouth rinse daily as well. Plan to see your dentist twice a year for regular check-ups and cleanings.