



Nutrition for Children

When your child eats or drinks sugars, the germs (bacteria) in your child's mouth mix with the sugars to make a mild acid. This acid attacks the hard outer layer of teeth (also called enamel). It can make holes (or cavities) in the teeth.

The damage that sugars do depends on how much sugar goes into the mouth and how long it stays in the mouth.

Any kind of sugar will mix with germs in the mouth. Natural sugars can have the same effect on teeth as white (or refined) sugar out of the bag! Many healthy foods contain natural sugars. Milk contains natural sugar.

If you put your child to bed with a bottle of milk, the milk stays in the mouth for a long time. This may cause cavities. Unsweetened fruit juice may have no added sugar, but fruit juice has natural sugars in it. If your child is always sipping juice between meals, the teeth are being coated in sugars over and over again.

Water is the best drink to have between meals. Starchy foods, like teething biscuits, break down to make sugars. If these kinds of food stay in your child's mouth long enough, they will make the acid that can cause cavities. Your job is to clean your child's teeth, not to stop your child from having milk, juice, bread or noodles. Your child needs these foods to stay healthy.

Read the labels of the packaged food you buy. By law, everything ingredient in packaged food is listed by weight. So if a sugar is listed first, you know that there is more sugar than anything else.

These are sugars you can look for on labels: corn sweeteners; corn syrup; dextrose; fructose; glucose; honey; maple syrup; molasses and sucrose.

Also, check to see if liquid medicines (such as cough syrup) have sugars. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to give you medicines that are sugar-free.

Snacks

Growing children need and like snacks. Here are some smart ways to give snacks:

Limit the number of times a day your child eats or drinks sugars. If your child sips juice or pop while playing, he or she will have sugars in the mouth over and over again. Water is the best drink to have between meals.

Do not give your child sugar-rich foods that stay in the mouth for a long time like gum with sugar in it, suckers (or lollipops) and other hard candy. Stay away from soft, sticky sweets that get stuck in the mouth such as toffee, raisins and rolled-up fruit snacks or fruit leather.

Keep good snacks handy where your child can get them. Have carrot sticks or cheese cubes on the bottom shelf of the fridge. Children like small things like small boxes of cereal, small fruits and vegetables, and small packs of nuts or seeds (provided they are safe for your child). Keep them in a low cupboard.

To keep your child from asking for sweets, do not buy them. If they are not in the house, you can't give them out. If you do serve sweets, limit them to meals. When your child is eating a meal, there is more saliva in the mouth. This helps to wash away the sugars.

Please feel free to call us anytime at 604-939-3368, or ask us any questions that you might have about this topic when you come in for your next visit.

Best regards,

Dr Aidin Ghotbi and Mint Dental staff