

You, your diet & your oral health

Healthy food choices help keep your body- including your mouth- healthy & strong.

Americans face a bewildering array of food choices that range from fresh produce to sugar-laden processed convenience meals and snack foods. What we eat and when we eat it may affect not only our general health, but also our oral health.¹

Mouth-saving advice.

The more often you eat and the longer foods stay in your mouth, the more damage occurs.² Tooth decay remains a problem because plaque (a sticky film of bacteria) constantly forms on our teeth. When we eat foods or drink beverages that contain sugar or starch, the bacteria in the plaque produces acids that attack tooth enamel. The stickiness of plaque then keeps the harmful acids against your teeth. This can contribute to tooth decay.³ Dr. Miles Hall, National Dental Director for CIGNA Dental, offers these tips to maintain your smile:

- **Snack wisely.** Focus on eating healthy, nutritious, and satisfying meals; but if you must snack, choose fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products. Avoid hard candy, mints, and sticky sweets that stay in your mouth for a long time. After treats, drink plenty of water to dilute the acid attacks.
- **Limit sugar and starch.** Sugary and starchy foods cause the bacteria in plaque to produce acids that break down tooth enamel, which may eventually cause decay. Eating a bit of Cheddar, Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese stimulates saliva production, which helps neutralize these acids.
- **Protect your teeth.** Don't chew ice or popcorn kernels. Don't use your teeth as tools. And avoid tobacco; studies suggest it may cause gum disease.

Indulge yourself: brush, floss, & see your dentist!

- **Use fluoride toothpaste.** Brush at least twice a day, and always at bedtime; replace your soft-bristled brush every 3-4 months (earlier if it is frayed).
- **Floss daily.** A toothbrush cannot clean between teeth.
- **Visit your dentist regularly.** Have periodic cleanings to reduce damaging tartar buildup and ask your dentist if you are brushing and flossing properly.



The hard truth about soft drinks

- 1 of every 4 beverages consumed in America today is a soft drink.
- Soft-drink consumption surpasses that of all other beverages, including milk, beer, coffee, and water.
- Some non-diet soft drinks contain as many as 11 teaspoons of sugar per serving.
- Studies show that higher consumption of sugary soft drinks is associated with the increased risk of developing tooth decay.

it's time to feel better

Choose wisely:
A healthy diet can help protect your teeth and gums!

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