



Healthy Living

Top Tips Of The Week - Oral Health Part 3, Food and Drink For Healthy Teeth

Sweets: Most children want them, but you can help to prevent problems by making sure they don't have them too often, and particularly not before bed, when saliva flow lessens. Try not to use as rewards.

Snacks: The best snacks are fruit and raw vegetables eg tangerines, bananas, cucumber or carrot sticks. Other good snacks include toast, rice cakes and plain popcorn. Dried fruit is high in sugar and can be bad for teeth, so only ever give it with meals as a dessert – and never as a snack between meals.

No Fizzy Drinks: They can contain large amounts of sugar, which will increase the risk of tooth decay. Drinks which contain sugar or are "diet" versions contain acids that can erode the outer surface of the tooth.

Milk or Water: The best drinks for children over one year old are plain still water or plain milk. Your child should have full-fat milk (whole milk) from the age of 12 months to two years. Semi-skimmed milk can be introduced from the age of two, as long as your child is a good eater and growing well for their age. Skimmed milk can be given to children aged five and over. Cow's milk is not suitable as a drink for babies under 12 months of age.

Fruit Juice and Smoothies: Unsweetened juices and smoothies contain sugars and acids, so although they can contribute towards their 5 A DAY, restrict your child to no more than one small glass (about 150ml) each day and only at mealtimes.

Also, be aware that unsweetened 100% fruit juice, vegetable juice and smoothies can only ever count as a maximum of one portion of their 5 A DAY. For example, if they have two glasses of fruit juice and a smoothie in one day, that still only counts as one portion. If your child is thirsty, it's better to give them water than to encourage a taste for sweet drinks. Try to avoid giving babies fruit-flavoured "baby juices", and never give them in feeding bottles. Fruit juice should not be given to babies under six months.

Bedtime Drinks: Teeth are at most risk at night because there is less saliva in the mouth to protect them. Water is the best drink to give at bedtime, but if you do give milk, don't add anything to it. Chocolate-flavoured drinks and milkshake powder usually contain sugars, which will increase the risk of decay.

Medicines: Yes. Always ask if a sugar-free medicine is available and remind your doctor about this if you're being given a prescription for your child. This is especially important if your child is taking long-term medication.



Bottles: You should begin moving away from bottles and on to a free-flow feeder cup at six months, and remove bottles totally by 12 months. Teats and spouts encourage children to suck for long periods of time, meaning the drinks that cause tooth decay stay in contact with your child's teeth for a long time



Sippy Cups: There's no need for a child to use a sippy cup. They're similar to a bottle in that they require the child to suck to make them work. A free-flow feeder cup is better, as it doesn't have valves and the flow of liquid is unrestricted. This means that children learn to drink normally rather than by sucking.



Dummy or Thumb Sucking: No, but they will encourage an open bite, which is when teeth move to make space for the dummy or thumb. They may also affect speech development. That's why you should avoid using dummies after 12 months of age. Thumb sucking won't cause permanent problems, as long as the habit stops by the time your child gets their second teeth, but it can be a hard habit to break. Discourage your children from talking or making sounds with their thumb or a dummy in their mouth, and don't dip dummies in anything sweet, such as sugar or jam.



Please get in touch if you have any questions about these tips