



## **Dietary Advice**

Decay has been shown not to be related to the total amount of sugar eaten or how often a person brushes their teeth. Decay is related to the total length of time that sugar is present in the mouth.

For example, eating a bag of sugar immediately after lunch but having no other sugar in your diet, it would be unlikely that tooth decay would occur. However, if you were to eat two packets of mints spread throughout the day then teeth would rapidly show signs of decay because sugar is in the mouth for longer. Brushing does not stop tooth decay except if fluoride is present in toothpaste.

### **SWEETS**

Any sweet, food or drink that stays in the mouth for a long period of time can and will cause decay.

Examples of high decaying products are mints, toffees, lollipops, sherbet, Liquorice, boiled sweets, chewy sweets and dried fruit like raisins . These should be avoided as a regular occurrence to reduce the risk of decay.

Chocolate is in the mouth for a shorter time and will do less damage than hard or sticky sweets.

Chewing gum and sugar free mints encourage saliva to be produced and are not harmful for teeth.

Examples of snacks that are non-damaging are cheese, nuts, bananas, carrots, meat and vegetables. Snacks that are only moderately damaging are potato crisps, fruit and bread.

Bearing this in mind you can eat anything you wish to have with meals, including a dessert, but should have no snacks or have only sugar-free snacks in-between meals. Sugar is found in many ordinary foods we eat as well as the obvious ones such as sweets, cakes and biscuits.

### **FOOD AND DRINKS**

Drinks can be harmful in exactly the same way as food, and any drink containing sugar or acid consumed regularly will damage the teeth.

Fizzy or carbonated drinks including sparkling water are all acidic. They will make the teeth more susceptible to decay, wear and sensitivity.

Highly acidic foods are; Oranges, vinegar, pickles, grapes, lemons, grapefruits and fromage fraîche.

Sport drinks contain very high levels of sugar combined with some salt and are damaging to teeth.

Sugar-free drinks and squashes often contain other ingredients that may damage teeth i.e. fruit acids or varieties of sugar (glucose, syrup , honey etc.)

Examples of drinks that are not damaging are water, milk, and sugar free tea.

A balanced diet helps tackle the risk of decay

This means a combination of the following;

- Carbohydrates- Potatoes, rice, bread, pasta, cereals and pulses
- Vegetables and Fruit- The recommendation is for five small portions per day, avoid dried fruit
- Protein- Meat, fish, eggs and cheese.

## **BRUSHING**

Brushing, except with toothpaste containing fluoride, has been shown to play no part in the level of decay. Teeth are brushed to control gum disease, to keep the teeth clean and reduce bad odours.

Teeth should be brushed twice daily, after breakfast and after the last meal of the day.

## **FLUORIDE**

There is currently No fluoride added to the water in Kent, Fluoride reduces the level of decay but diet will always be more effective.

High levels of fluoride, cause a white mottling or staining of the teeth when developing, thus children's' toothpaste contain lower levels of fluoride to counter possible swallowing.

## **FAST FACTS AND ADVICE;**

- Avoid acidic foods and drinks in large frequent quantities, Acids can soften teeth and make them more prone to decay.
- Reduce the time sugar is in the mouth by sticking to set meal times.
- Snacks should be sugar free.
- Brush teeth twice daily for healthy gums.
- Decay develops much faster in children.
- Eat a balanced diet to avoid constant sugar being present in the mouth