

FOODS FOR HEALTHY TEETH



Foods for healthy teeth and gums

We need the right kinds of foods for our bodies to grow, fight infections and heal from sickness and injury. Good food gives us the energy we need to think, learn, play and be physically active. It also keeps teeth and gums strong and healthy. Foods that are high in sugar can cause tooth decay (cavities).

The following healthy choices promote healthy teeth and gums:



✓ Vegetables (fresh canned or frozen)

- asparagus
- beans
- beets
- broccoli
- carrots
- cauliflower
- celery
- corn
- cucumber
- lettuce
- olives
- peas
- peppers
- potatoes
- spinach
- squash

✓ Fruit (fresh or frozen)

- apples
- apricots
- bananas
- blueberries
- cantaloupe
- cherries
- grapefruit
- melon
- nectarines
- oranges
- peaches
- pears
- plums
- strawberries
- tangerines



✓ Milk and dairy

- cheese
- cottage cheese
- milk
- yogurt



✓ Grain products

- bagels
- bread (whole grain)
- unsweetened dry cereal
- flatbread
- pita
- rice



✓ Meat and alternatives

- beef
- chicken (poultry)
- eggs
- fish
- nuts and seeds
- shellfish



✓ Snack ideas

- apple slices
- carrots
- celery
- cheese
- cottage cheese
- cheese
- hummus
- milk
- nut butter
- nuts & seeds
- oranges
- pitas
- popcorn
- pretzels
- rice cakes



Stop!

Do not give raisins, whole grapes and melon balls, stringy foods, whole olives, cherries with pits, whole nuts and seeds or popcorn, wieners and sausages to children under 4. It is easy to choke on these foods.



Drinks for healthy teeth and gums

Water is best!

Offer your child water when they are thirsty. You can also try flavored sparkling water.

Juice

Juice contains a lot of natural sugar. It's best to give your child fruit to eat, instead of juice. If you do give juice, give orange juice (not from concentrate) like Tropicana® or Oasis®. Limit juice to no more than 1/2 cup each day.

Milk & dairy products

Most children should have four servings of milk or dairy products each day. Serve milk with meals, and give milk, yogurt or cheese before bedtime. Help your child brush their teeth afterwards, though. Leaving the natural sugar in milk (and juice) on the teeth overnight can cause tooth decay.

More tips for healthy teeth and gums

✓ Do

- have regular mealtimes: breakfast, lunch and dinner, with 1-3 snacks/day pending on your child's appetite and activity level
- teach your child to drink from a cup at 12 months — children shouldn't use bottles after 12 months of age, and never at night
- follow the Canada Food Guide
- be knowledgeable that giving a child milk in a bottle or breastfeeding beyond 12 months increases the risk of cavities.

✗ Don't

- don't keep sweets in the house — your child will stop asking for sweets if you don't buy them
- don't allow food, bottles or sippy cups in bed
- don't graze — having crackers or dried cereals throughout the day will cause cavities (and quickly!)
- don't give juice or other sugar-sweetened beverages

Foods to limit or avoid

These foods are high in sugar, and promote tooth decay. If you give them, it's best to give them after a meal, as dessert. Avoid sticky, high sugar foods. They stay on teeth for a long time, and are hard to brush off.

Limit these foods, and give only after a meal (for dessert):

- Bear paws®
- chocolate milk
- honey
- sherbet
- sweetened cereal
- cake
- cookies
- pudding
- soft drinks
- candy
- drinkable yogurt
- jam & jelly
- sports drinks
- Zoodles®
- canned fruit in syrup
- donuts
- Jell-O®
- strawberry milk
- chocolate bars
- freezies
- milkshakes
- syrup
- graham crackers
- molasses

Try to stay away from these foods, they stick to teeth and are hard to brush off:

- granola
- Nutrigrain®
- dried fruit
- Fruit roll ups®
- raisins
- Pop tarts®
- bars

Remember to use non-food rewards for good behavior such as:

- stickers
- special activity like a trip to the library or favourite park
- new pencils for school
- extra reading time before bed
- play date with a friend
- playing a favourite game with a parent