

## Helpful hints:

- Remember that it is the number of times that the teeth are exposed to sweet, sticky and acid things that is important, not just the amount consumed.
- Sweet drinks are less damaging if taken through a straw, as it keeps the drink off the teeth. Drinking up in one go also reduces the teeth's exposure to sugar and is therefore better than sipping over a long time.
- Do grocery shopping without the children and buy savoury items instead of sweet ones.
- According to the Australian Institute of Sport, the best cereals are Weet-Bix® and VitaBrits®, and the cereals causing the most damage to teeth are Nutri-grain® and Coco Pops®.
- Avoid artificial and natural Jelly snakes, Roll-ups®, Minties® and sticky confectionary because they stay in the mouth for a long time more easily leading to tooth decay.
- Rather than having lollies in the house, buy your child a treat once a week, like a chocolate Freddo®, an Icy-pole® or an ice cream. They are not sticky and go through the mouth quickly.
- If making lolly bags for parties, include sugar free chewing gum, non-sticky foods and novelty items.
- If unable to brush immediately after eating sweet and acidic foods, a good alternative is to chew sugar-free gum for 10 minutes. This stimulates saliva flow that dilutes the acid and washes out the mouth.
- At parties, children should eat the lollies all at once instead of saving them for later.

## Where can I find more information?

Visit:

[www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Eating\\_Well\\_for\\_Children](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Eating_Well_for_Children)

## Oral health throughout your life

A prime function of your dentist's and orthodontist's care is the maintenance of your child's oral health.

Research has shown that people who have received orthodontic treatment generally have better oral health throughout life. This may be due to the better positions of their teeth, the encouragement to maintain good oral health received during orthodontic treatment, or both. Research has also shown that people with good oral hygiene suffer less heart disease, fewer strokes, less respiratory disease and fewer complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

It is therefore important that you continue to see your dentist for regular check ups and preventive care to maintain optimum dental health both during and after orthodontic treatment.

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# Healthy snacks for healthy teeth

## A healthy diet for children

A healthy and balanced diet is essential for good growth and development of children. Most nutritional advice suggests that children need a daily intake of grains (such as wholegrain bread) and protein (such as meat and fish), plus 3 pieces of fruit, 5 servings of vegetables and 3 intakes of dairy products (such as plain milk, cheese and natural yoghurt).

## Why do acidic and sweet foods cause tooth decay?

There are always bacteria in the mouth and on the teeth which change carbohydrates and sugars into acid, especially sweet food and drinks. Acid in the mouth dissolves tooth enamel, thus causing tooth decay and cavities. It is therefore very important to **REDUCE THE NUMBER OF TIMES DURING THE DAY** that children take in food and drinks that can lead to decay.

Children need to have gaps between meals to reduce the amount of acid in the mouth. Ideally, they should eat only three to five times a day for this reason. Drinks of water or plain milk between meals are important because they reduce acid on the teeth.

Choosing appropriate food and drinks for children, and particularly for their snacks between meals, can reduce the incidence of tooth decay and damage to orthodontic appliances.



## Which foods and drinks are acidic and sweet and damage teeth?

To reduce tooth decay, it is best to avoid foods and drinks such as these between meals and at school:

- ☹️ Soft drinks such as Cola and Lemonade
- ☹️ "Sports drinks", including sugar free ones
- ☹️ Juice and cordial, including Ribena®
- ☹️ Flavoured milk, such as Milo®, Quik®, Big M®
- ☹️ Cakes, sweet biscuits and lollies, including natural snakes
- ☹️ Sweetened cereals, such as Nutri-grain® and Coco Pops®
- ☹️ Dried fruit, like sultanas and apricots
- ☹️ Dried fruit Bars, such as Roll-ups®, and muesli bars
- ☹️ Jam, Honey and Nutella®

As fruit is both sweet and acidic, it is best to follow eating fruit with a small square of cheese, or a drink of milk or water to wash the acid from the mouth. Children who like to eat fruit before bedtime **MUST** rinse and brush their teeth afterwards.

Hard and sticky foods and snacks such as Minties®, Fantales®, Redskins®, hard muesli bars and hard biscuits can damage braces, crowns and fillings. While wearing braces, children must also avoid such things as chewing bones and ice cubes, and eating crackling and corn off the cob.



## Which snacks are tooth-friendly?

Not being sweet or acidic, these foods and drinks are less likely to cause tooth decay:

- 😊 Water and plain milk
- 😊 Nuts and popcorn
- 😊 Cracker biscuits and plain rice cakes
- 😊 Butter, Vegemite®, sliced ham, salmon, turkey or cheese
- 😊 Cut-up vegetables with dips, such as tzatziki or hummus
- 😊 Sushi

## How often should children brush their teeth?

Brushing should be done thoroughly at least twice a day, in the morning after breakfast and at night before going to bed. Evenings are also a good time to floss. Children who wear braces should also brush quickly after snacks and main meals to remove food from around their braces.

Children under seven years of age need to be helped to clean their teeth with a toothbrush and a pea-size ball of low fluoride toothpaste, which they should spit out without rinsing. After brushing at night, children should have nothing to eat or drink other than water.

For children who are more susceptible to decay, or who are wearing braces, the dentist or orthodontist may advise a special fluoride tooth paste or mouth rinse.

