Nutrition and Health

Keeping your teeth and gums beautiful, healthy, and strong is about more than just brushing, flossing, and avoiding sweets. Good nutrition also plays a large role in your dental health. It requires smart food choices and good timing.

A balanced diet

A balanced diet will help to boost your body's immune system, so you'll be less vulnerable to oral disease. It will also provide you with the nutrients your body needs to maintain strong teeth and healthy gums.

So what is a balanced diet? It includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, and moderate portions of protein, complex carbohydrates like whole grains and beans, low-fat dairy products, and unsaturated vegetable fats.

Also, eating foods like nuts, cheese, onions, and certain teas have been shown to actually slow down the growth of bacteria that causes tooth decay.



Starchy foods



Soda – "Liquid Candy"



A healthy diet

Foods to limit

In contrast, eating too many sweets, foods that stick to your teeth (like potato chips and dried fruit) and foods that are slow to dissolve in your mouth (like hard candies and granola bars) encourage tooth decay.

One of the main offenders when it comes to tooth decay is soda pop. Soda is one of the biggest sources of refined sugar in the American diet. In fact, a twelve-ounce can of soda contains about 12 teaspoons of sugar. Soda also contains phosphoric and citric acids, which can erode the protective enamel layer of your teeth.

Frequency and timing

Recent research has found that your dental health can also be affected by how often you eat. Every time you eat a sweet or starchy food, the bacteria in your mouth feast on it, and in turn, produce acids that attack your teeth for 20 minutes or more.

And the more frequently you eat, the more your teeth are exposed to these acids, which can eventually dissolve your tooth enamel and cause decay.

One way your diet can benefit your dental health is to combine your foods into a meal. Sticky or starchy foods create less acid in your mouth when they are eaten as part of a meal because saliva production increases at mealtime. Saliva not only rinses away food particles, but it also neutralizes harmful acids and helps to remineralize your teeth, so they're more resistant to acid attacks.

So to maximize your nutrition and your dental health, eat a well-balanced diet, limit sugary, starchy, and sticky foods and drinks, and avoid between-meal snacking.

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