

nutrition to HELP FIGHT dental decay



The mouth is the gateway to the body, which means that poor food and beverage choices impact the mouth and teeth in the first instance. What you eat and drink plays a significant role in whether you will suffer from dental decay.

An increase in consumption of soft and sports drinks is contributing to a marked decline in the dental health of Australian teens.

While a majority of Australians enjoy the benefits of water fluoridation, the increased consumption of non-fluoridated bottled water, although a preferred alternative, may also be contributing to an increase in decay rates.

This is because bottled water does not contain the fluoride, which has been so successful in reducing decay. The US Centers for Disease Control has rated water fluoridation as one of the Top 10 public health achievements of the 20th Century.

Research has shown that obesity is a significant predictor for periodontal or gum disease. Periodontal disease has a link with cardiovascular or heart disease. Studies show that the dental infections from periodontal disease are risk factors for cardiovascular disease, which emphasises the importance of following a healthy eating plan from a young age.

The ADA recommends the following tips to maintain good oral health:

- Keep sugary snacks to a minimum and try to time them closely to meal times. Each time food containing sugar or starch is eaten, bacteria are immediately activated, which attack teeth for at least 20 minutes. Eating snacks close to meal times reduces the incidence of these attacks.
- Chewing gum is actually a good thing, and people should chew sugar free gum after consumption of sugary sweets. This stimulates saliva flow and again protects the teeth from decay. Some chewing gums and tooth creams contain calcium and other compounds that help to repair and strengthen tooth structure. They can help to stop small decay spots and actually reverse small amounts of decay.
- Follow a diet high in fruit and vegetables and ensure dairy products are consumed as they contain calcium, which is essential for healthy teeth.
- Where possible, minimise consumption of sugary, high acid soft and sports drinks and fruit juices.
- If these beverages are consumed, follow with a glass of water, preferably fluoridated tap water.
- Maintain good oral hygiene. Brush, floss and rinse your mouth with a fluoridated mouth rinse. Flossing teeth has been shown to help protect against periodontal or gum disease.
- Visit your dentist regularly, rather than waiting for a problem to occur.

