

# Eating for healthy teeth and energy



## Mouthguard Awareness Fact Sheet

**If you're active and play lots of sport, it's really important to eat foods that give you lots of energy and stamina. Additionally, you need to ensure that you are drinking the right types of beverages to make sure you remain hydrated.**

It's best to eat two to three hours before you play sport. If you are playing sport for more than an hour and a half, then it's a good idea to have a snack to help keep up your energy levels.

Some examples of the types of foods to eat before you play sport include:

- Carbohydrates: these help to build and maintain muscle, provide long lasting energy and help your body recover after playing sport.
- Protein: eating small amounts of protein helps to build strong and healthy bones and muscles.

Some of the best food and drink options to have before playing sport include:

- Sandwich: with fillings like lettuce, tomatoes and carrots and some low fat cheese, tinned tuna or ham
- Fruit: Bananas, apples and pears
- Pasta: Try pasta with a healthy tomato based sauce with lots of vegetables and some low fat mince meat
- Drink tap water: it's the best thing to keep you hydrated and it contains fluoride to keep your teeth healthy. A couple of hours before playing sport, plain milk is a good choice too, for energy

Try to avoid foods that are:

- High in fat like fast food or chocolate bars
- High in "empty" carbohydrates. These are foods that have lots of sugar in them like some snack bars and muesli bars. These foods can give you a quick energy hit, but do not give you energy over a long time, so they are not the best foods to eat when playing sport. Also, lots of sugar is really bad for your teeth and can cause decay and holes in your teeth
- Sports drinks often have lots of sugar and sodium as well as high levels of caffeine in them. They should be avoided unless you are an elite athlete. Most people, especially children, should stick to drinking tap water. It's great for hydration and looks after your teeth too

Your sports teacher or coach can talk to you about the best foods to eat for your sport.



## Classroom activity:

Start by making two lists on the blackboard.

List 1 Food and drinks that are good for your teeth.	List 2 Food and drinks that can be bad for your teeth.

**Teacher/coach:** Ask children to give you a list of foods and drinks for list one and then a list of foods and drinks for list two.

**Teacher:** Ask children to explain why each food or drink on list 1 is good to eat/drink before sport.

**Teacher:** Explain to children why foods and drinks in list 2 can be bad. Use the following information as a guide:

### Why some foods can be bad for teeth

Foods: Snacks, especially those high in sugar, feed the destructive bacteria in your mouth, which puts acid on your teeth. Acid on your teeth is not a good thing because it can lead to tooth decay or holes in your teeth.

When you are choosing what to eat, dentists recommend that you snack on foods that don't stick to your teeth. Next time you eat something, see if you can feel if bits of food are stuck in your teeth – especially in your back teeth. Sugary lollies, some muesli bars and biscuits often stick to your teeth, which feed the bacteria, which attack your teeth and can cause tooth decay. It's better to eat these sorts of foods occasionally. Carrots and fruit usually don't stick to your teeth, which means they are a better snack.

**Soft drinks and sports drinks:** These drinks are full of sugar (a 600ml bottle can contain up to 13 teaspoons of sugar). Both sports and soft drinks also have high acid levels, which can damage teeth.

### Remember:

- Eat healthy foods to help give you energy when you play sports
- Drink lots of tap water – it will keep you hydrated and it also has fluoride which keeps teeth healthy
- Always wear protective gear when playing sport, and if you play sport, which could result in a knock to the head, always wear a mouthguard.

For more information on healthy eating and drinking for teeth and tips on mouthguard awareness, visit:  
[www.ada.org.au](http://www.ada.org.au).



Australian Dental Association