

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release.

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Sipping, Snacking, and Tooth Decay

Many parents across the country will issue common refrains at dinnertime tonight: “You’d better eat that—it’s good for you!” or “Don’t eat that—it’ll rot your teeth!”

Now more than ever, kids are faced with a bewildering array of food choices, from fresh produce to sugar-laden processed convenience meals and snack foods. What children eat and when they eat it may affect not only their general health but also their oral health.

Americans are consuming foods and drinks high in sugar and starches more often and in larger portions than ever before. For example, the average teenage boy in the U.S. consumes 81 gallons of soft drinks each year! A steady diet of sugary foods and drinks can ruin teeth, especially among those who snack habitually on foods with minimal nutritional value, and frequently sip on sugary drinks throughout the day.

When sugar is consumed repeatedly in large, often hidden amounts, the harmful effect on teeth can be dramatic. Sugar on teeth provides food for bacteria, which produce acid. The acid can damage the enamel on teeth.

Almost all foods have some type of sugar that cannot, and should not, be eliminated from our diets. Many of these foods contain important nutrients and add enjoyment to eating, but there is a risk for tooth decay from a diet high in sugars and starches. Starches can be found in everything from bread to pretzels to salad dressing, so read labels and plan carefully for a balanced, nutritious diet for you and your kids.

Reduce your children’s risk of tooth decay:

- Sugary foods and drinks should be consumed with meals. Saliva production increases during meals and helps neutralize acid production and rinse food particles from the mouth.
- Limit between-meal snacks. If kids crave a snack, offer them nutritious foods.
- If your kids chew gum, make it sugarless. Chewing sugarless gum after eating can increase saliva flow and help wash out food and decay-producing acid.
- Monitor beverage consumption. Children should make healthy beverage choices such as water and low-fat milk.
- Help your children develop good brushing and flossing habits.
- Schedule regular dental visits.

For additional dental health basics visit http://www.pphd.org/Pages/dental_program.htm, <http://www.mouthhealthy.org> or call Kendra Lauruhn, Public Health Dental Hygienist, at Panhandle Public Health District at 308-633-2866 ext 106 or toll free at 877-218-2490. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. This article was prepared as a public service to the community from the American Dental Association.

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