



Dental Health Awareness

Tooth decay (cavities) affects children in the United States more than any other chronic infectious disease. Cavities are painful and can lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. The good news is that cavities can be prevented!

Germs that cause cavities love to eat carbohydrates (sugars and starches) in snack foods and drinks like:

- **Sugary sweet foods or drinks:** sugar in things like juice, pop, candy, cake, ice cream, cookies, and kool-aid can cause cavities!
- **Sticky foods:** food that sticks to teeth like raisins, fruit snacks, chips, crackers, or sugary cereal feeds germs and can cause cavities!
- **Acidic foods and drinks:** sour things, sport drinks (like Gatorade), candy, and diet pop can have a lot of acid that causes cavities!

Some Snacks Are Better.....

- **Eat tooth healthy foods/drinks like:** fruit, or applesauce & vegetables, cheese. Cheese & yogurt. Low-sugar cereal & whole wheat bagels. Meat & eggs. Water. A few crackers or pretzels or popcorn (if you brush any stuck food out after eating).

But even healthy food can cause cavities!

- **What** you eat/drink (sweet/sticky) and **how often** you eat/drink (snack habits) causes cavities!
- Every time **ANY** bite of food or drink (other than water) goes in the mouth, the body and germs make acid to attack teeth for 20 minutes. The 20 minutes starts over with every bite/drink you take!

How You Can Prevent Cavities

- Set regular meal and snack times. Eat healthy snacks and meals.
- Use straws- it helps keep drinks off the teeth and to prevent cavities.
- Keep teeth clean. Brush your child's teeth twice a day and floss daily

- Use fluoride toothpaste (tiny smear for children under age 2, pea size at age 2)
- Do not put your child to bed with a cup or bottle
- Give milk or juice for meals or a sit-down snack, give water in between
- Drink fluoridated water (see "Did You Know" below)
- Do not share food, cups, or utensils because cavity germs in spit can spread
- Don't suck on hard candy or snack or drink all day long.
- Only buy 100% juice (with no added sugar).
- Mix juice with water (1/2 juice and 1/2 water) and give less than 6 oz a day.

Did You Know...

- You can save hundreds of dollars a year by drinking city water instead of bottled water
 - Tip: get a reusable water bottle and fill with city water to take on-the-go
- Most bottled water does NOT have fluoride in it, though most city water DOES
 - Tip: if you prefer bottled water, buy the kind labeled "nursery" to ensure it contains fluoride

If you need help finding a local dentist or have questions about oral health, call the I-Smile program at (319) 292-2208 or visit their website <http://www.ismiledentalhome.org/>