



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Food to Prevent Tooth Decay**

To prevent tooth decay, follow a few additional guidelines to keep the amount of acid created by the bacteria on your teeth to a minimum. Here are some tips: Limit between-meal snacking to reduce the amount of time your teeth are exposed to acid. If you snack, choose foods that are not fermentable carbohydrates. Best choices: cheese, chicken or other meats, nuts or milk. These foods are believed to be "anti-cariogenic." That is, they may actually help protect tooth enamel by counteracting acidity or by providing the calcium and phosphorus needed to remineralize teeth.

Moderate choices: firm fruits like apples and pears, and vegetables. Although firm fruits contain natural sugars that are fermentable, they have a high water content that dilutes the effects of the sugar and they stimulate the flow of saliva, which has antibacterial factors and helps protect against decay. Vegetables do not contain enough carbohydrates to be dangerous.

Worst choices: candy, cookies, cakes, crackers, bread, muffins, potato chips, French fries, pretzels, bananas, raisins and other dried fruits. These foods provide a source of sugar for certain bacteria on the teeth to produce acid. The problem can be worse if the foods stick to or get caught between teeth.

Limit the amount of soft drinks or any other sugar-containing drink, including coffee or tea with added sugar, cocoa, and lemonade. Fruit juices contain natural sugars that can also cause decay. Limit the amount of time you take to drink any of these drinks instead of sipping them throughout the day. A can a soda finished with a meal in 20 minutes is better than a can of soda finished in two hours because it will decrease the amount of time your teeth are exposed to high acid levels.

Better choices: unsweetened tea, milk and water, especially fluoridated water. Water helps flush away food debris and can dilute the sugar acids. Avoid sucking on hard candies or mints, even the tiny ones. They have enough sugar to increase the acid produced by bacteria to decay levels. If you need a mint, use the sugarless varieties. Very acidic foods (such as citrus fruits, tomatoes and lemons) can make the mouth more acidic and may contribute to tooth demineralization. The effects of acid exposure add up, so every little bit counts. Since these are healthy foods, try to eat them as part of a meal or follow them with cheese, meat or milk.

Brush your teeth after eating to remove the plaque bacteria that create the destructive acids. If you cannot brush after every meal, brush at least twice a day to thoroughly remove all plaque bacteria. Chewing sugarless gum that contains xylitol can help reduce the risk of cavities. It not only helps dislodge some of the food stuck to your teeth, but it also increases saliva flow to help buffer the acids.

Source: <http://www.intelihealth.com>