



**AUSTRALIAN DENTAL  
ASSOCIATION**

# Snack Attack

## You are what you eat

Every parent knows that chocolates, lollies, and fizzy drinks are bad for their child's teeth. It's because the sugar in these foods and drinks is harmful and causes dental decay, a disease that more than 50% of Aussie kids suffer. A disease that is entirely preventable.

Tooth decay is caused by how frequently we snack and how long you are exposed to food at any one time. This doesn't mean just lollies and fizzy drinks; this includes foods that are high in natural sugars or starch.

Every time we eat our teeth are exposed to the sugars in food. The bacteria in our mouths (plaque) use these sugars to make acid, and if teeth are exposed to this acid long enough holes develop - this is known as tooth decay.

Don't worry; it's not all bad news. No one is saying that your children should never be allowed to eat sugary foods again! Rather, when choosing snacks, be aware of how much sugar is in them, but more importantly, reduce the number of times they eat these foods and make sure they are eaten in an appropriate time frame, not over long periods of time.

### So what can my children snack on?

Finding and preparing healthy snacks can be a challenge, especially if you have a fussy eater or a child with food intolerance. Being informed gives you the best chance of making good nutritional choices for your kids.

#### TIPS

- Remember, snacks are meals in between main meals so they should be light and low in sugar.
- Fresh is best. Packaged foods are generally higher in sugar than their fresh alternatives.
- Always read the label – if sugar is listed in the top three ingredients it's usually not a good sign.
- Searching online is a great way to find healthy snack ideas for you and the kids.

There are some simple changes you can make to stop decay in its tracks - and it's never too late!

#### 5 TIPS TO STOP DECAY IN ITS TRACKS

1. Avoid snack foods that are sticky, gummy, chewy or sweet.
2. Avoid grazing! Have set meals times and form a routine.
3. Limit fruit to two servings per day. Fruit is good but too much can be harmful.
4. Give your kids water with every meal to help wash away lingering food.
5. Be selective with snacks. Vegies, cheeses and lean meats are great and tasty options.

Taking care of teeth, gums, lips and the mouth are important from a very early age. The habits your children form today are the ones they will take through life and will have a dramatic effect on their overall health. Teach them good habits and lead by example. Everything you have just read applies to you too!



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