

## What is a healthy diet for my child?

A healthy diet is a balanced diet that naturally supplies all the nutrients your child needs to grow. A balanced diet is one that includes the following major food groups:

Fruits Vegetables Grains Meat & Beans Milk

## How does my children's diet affect their dental health?

They must have a balanced diet for their teeth to develop properly. They also need a balanced diet for healthy gum tissue around the teeth. Equally important, a diet high in certain kinds of carbohydrates, such as sugar and starches, may place your child at extra risk for tooth decay.

## How do I make children's diet safe for their teeth?

First, be sure they have a balanced diet. Then, check how frequently they eat foods with sugar or starch in them. Foods with starch include breads, crackers, pasta and snacks, such as pretzels and potato chips. When checking for sugar, look beyond the sugar bowl and candy dish. A variety foods contain one or more types of sugar, and all types of sugars can promote dental decay. Fruits, a few vegetables, and most milk products have at least one type of sugar.

Sugar can be found in many processed foods, even some that do not taste sweet. For example, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich not only has sugar in the jelly, but may have sugar added to the peanut butter. Sugar is also added to such condiments as ketchup and salad dressings.



## Should my child give up all foods with sugar or starch?

Certainly not! Many of these foods provide nutrients your child needs. You simply need to select and serve them wisely. A food with sugar or starch is safer for teeth if it is eaten with a meal, not as a snack. Sticky foods, such as dried fruit or toffee, are not easily washed away from the teeth by saliva, water or milk. Therefore, they have more cavity-causing potential than foods more rapidly cleared from the teeth. At Little Smiles, you can always ask us about selecting and serving foods that protect your child's dental health.

## Does a balanced diet assure that my child is getting enough fluoride?

No. A balanced diet does not guarantee the proper amount of fluoride for the development and maintenance of your child's teeth. If you do not live in a fluoridated community or have an ideal amount of naturally occurring fluoride in your well water, your child may need a fluoride supplement during the years of tooth development. We can help assess how much supplemental fluoride your child needs, base upon the amount of fluoride in your drinking water and other potential sources of fluoride.

## My youngest is not on solid foods yet. Do you have any suggestions for him or her?

Do not nurse a young child to sleep or put him to bed with a bottle of milk, formula, juice or sweetened liquid. While a child sleeps, any unswallowed liquid in the mouth feeds bacteria that produce acids and attack the teeth. Protect your child from severe tooth decay by putting him or her to bed with nothing more than a pacifier or bottle of water.

## Any final advice?

Yes, here are some tips for your child's diet and dental health.

1. Ask Little Smiles to help you assess your child's diet.
2. Shop smart! Do not routinely stock your pantry with sugary starchy snacks. Buy fun foods just for special times.
3. Limit number of snack time; choose nutritious snacks.
4. Provide a balanced diet, and save foods with sugar or starch for meal times.
5. Do not put your young child to bed with a bottle of milk, formula or juice.
6. If your child chews gum or sips soda, choose those without sugar.