Five Steps to Good Oral Health:

1. Replace candy and sugary foods with healthy options.
2. Limit the amount of fruit juice to four ounces a day and encourage your child to drink it in one sitting. Sipping on juice throughout the day restarts the 20 minutes that acid is attacking the teeth that will lead to tooth decay.
3. Read food labels. Avoid foods where sugar is in the top three ingredients. Sugar has many names like refined sugar, fructose, corn syrup, nutritive sweetener, sucrose, lactose, honey, natural sweetener, glucose, dextrose, molasses, or malt.
4. Once the first tooth appears, brush the baby's teeth twice a day using a smear of fluoride toothpaste on soft bristle baby toothbrush.
5. Use fluoride toothpaste to prevent cavities. For children under age 2, use a smear of toothpaste. For children between the ages of 2 and 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste.

During the first years of your child's life, diet plays an important role in their health and development. Parents make most of the food choices for their young children. It is important to choose a well balanced diet that includes healthy foods like fruits and vegetables while your child is growing and developing.

Dental Health Resources: Choosing the Right Foods

North Carolina Oral Health Section
www.oralhealth.ncdhhs.gov

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/topics/child.htm

United States Department of Agriculture
http://www.choosemyplate.gov/

State of North Carolina, Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
Department of Health and Human Services, Albert A. Delia, Acting Secretary
Division of Public Health – Oral Health Section
www.ncdhhs.gov • www.oralhealth.ncdhhs.gov
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Early Dental Health: Choosing the Right Foods

Are healthy foods important for good oral health?

How does sugar cause a cavity to form?

What types of foods are good for healthy teeth?

Are there any foods that I should limit ?

What if my child already has a sugar habit?

What should I give my child to drink during the day?

Step by Step to Early Dental Health

NC Oral Health Section

Are healthy foods important for good oral health?

Yes. Choosing healthy foods not only helps your child grow healthy and strong, but it also helps to develop, grow, and protect their teeth. By choosing foods that have little or no sugar, you can help avoid tooth decay. A diet high in sugar increases the risk for tooth decay.

How does sugar cause a cavity to form?

It is natural to have bacteria growing in the mouth. The bacteria will attach to what is commonly known as dental plaque. Plaque is a sticky, clear film that builds up on the teeth and contains communities of bacteria. When plaque is exposed to food and drinks with sugar, it forms acid. If the acid stays on teeth for 20 to 40 minutes it can cause cavities.

PLAQUE GERMS FEEDING ON SUGAR MAKE ACID

PLAQUE + SUGAR = ACID
ACID + TOOTH = DECAY

Early Childhood Tooth Decay

What types of foods are good for healthy teeth?

Eating foods rich in calcium, Vitamin C and Vitamin D helps teeth and gums to grow and stay healthy. The following foods are high in calcium, Vitamin C or Vitamin D:

- Fruits such as apples, oranges, pears, bananas, cantaloupe, pineapple, kiwi fruit, strawberries, mangos and peaches.
- Vegetables such as celery, carrots, turnips, broccoli, cauliflower and green peppers.
- Diary products such as fat free or low-fat milk (whole milk for children under age 2), soy milk, yogurt, cheese and rice or almond milk.
- Crunchy snacks such as toast, crackers, and dry cereal with no sugar added.

Are there any foods that I should limit?

You should limit fruits like lemons and limes that can weaken the tooth enamel. You should also avoid sticky foods like raisins, sweet rolls, caramel candy, gummy candy, and taffy. Limit the amount of fruit juice to four ounces a day and encourage your child to drink it in one sitting. These foods have a high amount of sugar and can cause tooth decay.

What if my child already has a sugar habit?

Try giving your child unsweetened cereal with mashed fruit to help with his sweet cravings. Limit sugary foods and drinks (including juice) to mealtimes.

What should I give my child to drink during the day?

Your child should only have water to sip on throughout the day. Water does not have any sugars that can build up on the teeth and cause decay. Water should be the drink for in between meals.