

# Oral Health Advice

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## Why does healthy eating matter?

Your general health and your resistance to many diseases depend considerably on eating a healthy well balanced diet.

Your eating and drinking habits affect the health of your teeth.

Dental plaque is a soft sticky substance that builds up on your teeth. It is mostly made up of bacteria that feed on sugar from food and drink, producing acids as a waste product. The acid attack the teeth by dissolving the minerals in the tooth surface. If this happens too often, it results in tooth decay.

Acids in food and drink can dissolve away the tooth surface. All fizzy drinks (including diet brands and fizzy mineral water), all squashes and fruit juices are acidic to varying degrees. Pickles and citrus fruits are examples of acidic types of food.

After an acid attack, teeth can repair themselves, given the opportunity. It helps if fluoride (a mineral that is an ingredient in most toothpaste, and is in the water supply in some areas) is present in the mouth.

## Most dental problems can be avoided if you:

- remove plaque by brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- do not have sugary and / or acidic food and drink too often during the day (try to have these at mealtimes and not in between)
- chewing sugar-free gum can help, as this increases the flow of saliva, which helps teeth repair themselves

Between meals you should only have 'safe' drinks, which are not sugary or acidic. Milk and water are 'safe' drinks. So are tea and coffee if you do not add sugar to them.

You should try and avoid snacking between meals. If you do snack, only have 'safe' snacks which are not sugary or acidic. Fruits, vegetables and items such as sandwiches, toast, crumpets and pitta bread, are all 'safe' snacks.

## Remember:

- always brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- only have 'safe' drinks and snacks between meals
- eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day