

Information Sheet No 5

Sugar In The Diet

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CREATING SMILES

Sugar In The Diet

Over the last 30 years, our national diet has changed dramatically to include many more processed foods, snacks and soft drinks. Many of these contain a high proportion of sugars, salt and fat. The more we snack, the more we need to be careful of what we eat and how best to protect our teeth.

Sugar And Decay

Plaque is a soft, sticky bacterial deposit that forms on the surface of the teeth. When you eat foods containing sugars, the bacteria in the plaque feed on the sugar to produce plaque acids which attack the enamel of the tooth surface, causing decay (caries). The more often you eat or drink products that contain sugars, means the more acid attacks your teeth could suffer. The sugars that cause most dental decay are those which are added to foods and drinks during manufacture, processing or food preparation. They are found in confectionary, soft drinks, cakes, biscuits, table sugar and a range of snacks and ready foods. Sugars that are naturally present in foods such as milk, fruit and vegetables are not an important cause of decay.

Sugary Drinks

Children's teeth are particularly prone to damage from sugars, and they should be given sugar free drinks whenever possible. Check labels carefully to find out whether foods and drinks contain sugars. Never leave a child to drink a sweetened drink from a bottle, especially at bedtime or as a comforter. Fruit juices contain sugars and should be diluted, one part to ten parts water for younger children. Always serve in a cup at mealtimes.

Do You Know How Much Sugar You Eat And Drink ?

| Food | Amount | No of Teaspoons of Sugar |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Chocolate- milk/plain | 1 bar (100g) | 6 |
| Kit Kat | 1 bar | 4 ½ |
| Mars bar | 1 bar | 8 ½ |
| Chocolate digestive | 1 biscuit | 1 |
| Danish pastry | 1 pastry | 6 |
| Sugar puffs | 1 portion | 4 ½ |
| Cup-a- soup | 1 portion | 2 ¼ |
| Baked beans | 1 medium portion | 1 ½ |
| Fruit corner yoghurt | 1 portion | 3-4 ½ |
| Brown sauce/Tomato sauce | 1 serving | 1 ½ |
| Sunny delight | 500ml | 11 |
| Coca cola | 1 can | 7 |
| Milk shake | 1 glass | 8 |

Reducing The Damage

- * The most important measure is to reduce the frequency of sugar intake. Cut down on sugar-containing drinks and foods, particularly between meals
- * Snack instead on crisp vegetables, fruit, cheese, bread and unsweetened yoghurt
- * Milk and water are good choices for drinks
- * Restrict eating sugar-containing foods and drinks to mealtimes, when saliva production is high and can neutralize plaque acids
- * Some sweets are more harmful than others. If you must eat sweet things, keep them for a special treat and eat all in one go, rather than nibbling through the day
- * Get label-aware. Check for sugars in prepared foods and avoid them between meals