



Safe Snacking For Healthy Teeth

Everybody snacks occasionally between meals, some of us more than others. Sometimes it is because we are genuinely hungry, but equally it may be that we are bored, want something to cheer us up, or it is simply a habit.

The snacks to keep just for occasional treats are:

- * Sweets and chocolates
- * Cakes and biscuits
- * Crisps and fried foods

There is no shortage of healthier alternatives to these:

- * For babies from 6 months onwards who are at weaning stage, try finger foods such as wholemeal toast, chapatti, pitta bread, breadsticks, banana or peeled apple slices, cooked carrot or green beans and cubes of cheese e.g. cheddar. There is no need to introduce confectionary or sweet biscuits- your child will not be deprived if you don't.
- * For toddlers from 1 to 3 years, you can branch out, offering cooked pasta twirls, raw vegetables e.g. cucumber, carrot slices or slices of pepper, thin cut sandwiches cut into small pieces, fingers of toast covered with cheese spread or scrambled egg on toast with tomato slices. Plain biscuits such as crackers or rice cakes and plain yoghurt with chopped fruit are also fine. Aim to keep sugar-sweetened foods for mealtimes and don't use them as a reward if you can help it.
- * For older children and adults, suitable snacks would include sandwiches and filled rolls with fillings such as lean meat, chicken, egg, cottage cheese, tuna or sardines. Baked beans on toast, fresh fruit or unsalted nuts (for 5 years old and upwards due to the risk of choking) are also healthy alternatives.

The Key To Protecting Your Teeth

Remember that it is the frequency of consumption of sugary snacks that matters. If you can keep a bar of chocolate for eating after a meal in one go, that is much better than dipping into a bag of boiled sweets every 15 minutes throughout the day.