



Grandparents Corner

October 2018

Sipping, Snacking and Tooth Decay

Many parents across the country will issue a common refrain at dinnertime tonight - "You'd better eat that, it's good for you!" There is another old favorite in the parental arsenal of dietary admonitions: "Don't eat that - it'll rot your teeth!" Now more than ever, kids are faced with a bewildering array of food choices - from fresh produce to sugar-laden processed convenience meals and snack foods. What children eat and when they eat it may affect not only their general health, but also their oral health.

Americans are consuming food and drinks high in sugar and starches more often and in larger portions than ever before. It's clear that junk foods and drinks gradually have replaced nutritious beverages and foods for many people. For example, the average teenage boy in the US consumes 81 gallons of soft drinks each year! Alarmingly, a steady diet of sugary foods and drinks can ruin teeth, especially among those who snack throughout the day. Common activities may contribute to the tendency toward tooth decay. These include grazing habitually on foods with minimal nutritional value, and frequently sipping on sugary drinks.

When sugar is consumed over and over again in large, often hidden amounts, the harmful effect on teeth can be dramatic. Sugar on teeth provides food for bacteria, which produces acid. The acid in turn can eat away the enamel on teeth.

Almost all foods have some type of sugar that cannot and should not be eliminated from our diets. Many of these foods contain important nutrients and add enjoyment to eating. But there is a risk for tooth decay from a diet high in sugars and starches. Starches can be found in everything from bread to pretzels to salad dressing, so read labels and plan carefully for a balanced, nutritious diet for you and your kids.

Reduce your children's risk of tooth decay:

- Sugary foods and drinks should be consumed with meals. Saliva production increases during meals and helps neutralize acid production and rinses food particles from the mouth.
- Limit between-meal snacks. If kids crave a snack, offer them nutritious foods.
- If your kids chew gum, make it sugarless - chewing sugarless gum after eating can increase saliva flow and help wash out food and decay-producing acid.
- Monitor beverage consumption. Children should make healthy beverage choices such as water and low-fat milk.
- Help your children develop good brushing and flossing habits.
- Schedule regular dental visits.

Source: American Dental Association - www.ada.org

Most victims of abuse are women, but some are men. Likely targets are older people who have no family or friends nearby and people with disabilities, memory problems or dementia. Abuse can happen to any older person, but often affects those who depend on others for help with activities of everyday life—including bathing, dressing and taking medicine. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. *Neglect is defined as providing inadequate food, water, clothing, shelter or help with personal hygiene and health care when medically and legally sanctioned. T F*
2. *The National Center on Elder Abuse estimates that only a small fraction of cases are reported. T F*
3. *People with dementia are especially vulnerable to mistreatment. T F*
4. *One of the signs of elder abuse is changes in the person's behavior or emotional state, such as withdrawal, fear, anxiety or apathy. T F*
5. *For most adults, moderate alcohol use is up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and older people. T F*
6. *The beer or two you could drink without consequence in your 30s or 40s has more impact in your 60s or 70s. T F*
7. *A sign of emotional abuse in a person is feelings of helplessness, a hesitation to talk openly, fear, withdrawal, depression, or agitation. T F*
8. *People with moderate dementia will remember how much they drank. T F*
9. *Because alcohol and many medications are processed by the liver, this can enhance the effects of alcohol or the medications T F*
10. *Financial changes is not a sign of possible elder abuse. T F*

KEY: 1. T 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. T 7. T 8. F 9. T 10. F