

Manhattan Pediatric Dental Group, PC

Practice Limited to Dentistry for Children Young Adults & the Handicapped
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Your Child's Diet and Dental Health



We all know that sugars are cariogenic (i.e., help produce cavities). You may not be aware that a diet high in carbohydrates and starches may also place your child at risk for developing tooth decay. These foods include breads, crackers, pasta and such snacks as pretzels and potato chips.

When you eat, food passes through the mouth encountering bacteria that reside there. These germs love sugars and starches, and when they are not cleared from the mouth the bacteria use them to produce acids that destroy the hard surfaces of the tooth. It is increasingly apparent that the total amount of cariogenic foods your child consumes is not the only issue that need be considered. The **form, time of day** and the **frequency** of consumption is extremely critical in determining the condition of your child's dental health. If your child must eat sweets or carbohydrates keep in mind the following:

Form. If your child eats a candy bar that contains sugars in a sticky form, the sugar in the candy bar will retain itself on and between the teeth. This condition exposes teeth to a greater risk for cavities. If you must snack on sugars or carbohydrates, eat those that are not very retentive on tooth structure.

Time of day. Eat foods with sugars or carbohydrates as part of a meal, when possible. Other foods consumed during mealtime including liquids (and the saliva produced) help to clear the mouth of those cariogenic substances.

Frequency. Snacking on cariogenic food multiple times during the day is significantly more harmful than eating them once a day. This is because each period of exposure produces an acid attack. Lesson to be learned: snack once a day for as short a period as possible for better dental health.

Tips for better dental health

1. Snack on foods that are nutritious, such as cheese, raw vegetables, yogurt, or fruit.



2. Try sugarless gum as a substitute for snacking, or chew it following a snack to stimulate the flow of saliva.



3. Brush or rinse the mouth with water following a snack.



4. Brush at least twice a day (in the AM and PM prior to bed) with a small amount of a fluoride toothpaste and then floss.



5. If old enough to spit have your child rinse with a fluoride mouth rinse before bed after brushing.



6. Consider dental sealants for the permanent molar to protect those susceptible chewing surfaces.

