



Diet for a healthy mouth, or how to ward off the evil decay spirits

Would you like to never get another cavity? **It is possible.** In fact, if you follow just a few rules, you are almost guaranteed **never** to get another cavity.

Here's how it works. Everybody has germs in their mouths. Decay happens when certain of these germs turn sugar into acid. This acid causes decay. The good guy is your saliva. The saliva neutralises the acid produced by the germs (stick around, this will get more interesting). It takes 2 hours however after having anything with sugar for your teeth to stop dissolving.

So, your teeth are dissolving for two hours after you have anything with sugar. If you have three meals a day and nothing in between, your teeth dissolve for six hours a day. They seem to cope OK with this. Every sugary snack between meals adds an extra two hours to your dissolving time. If you've got enough fingers count up how many meals or snacks or drinks with sugar you have a day. Multiply by two (use toes as necessary) and you get how much of the day your teeth spend decaying.

If it's 10 hours or more, you may as well reserve a seat in our chair for lots of fillings.

Public enemy number one, the sugary snacks are the obvious ones like sweets lozenges, biscuits and cakes, but this also includes drinks with sugar such as soft drinks, fruit juice, coffee or tea with sugar. Did you know that a large McDonalds Coke has 22 teaspoons of sugar? It's full of acid too, which really wrecks the teeth. A cup of fruit juice is healthier, but still has 6-8 teaspoons. The worst snacks are those you suck on for a long time, especially sour sweets which have built-in acid.

Even "healthy" snacks and dried fruit are loaded with sugar.

Before all you chocoholics jump out the window, there is a simple solution. All you have to do is bundle up all your snacks and juice and include them with the three major meals. Presto! No more decay. If you must gobble or nibble between meals some things are OK. Most dairy products, fresh fruit (not dried) and vegetables are fine to have as snacks. Meat, cheese and the like are good too. You can drink water, milk, coffee or tea unsweetened or with sugar substitute, and watered-down juices in moderation. Juice with soda water tastes good, and has a lot less sugar and calories. Diet soft drinks and sugarless gum are sort of OK but don't overdo it.

It sounds easy and it is. The rest is up to you.

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