

Eating for Optimal Oral Health

EAT FOODS IN THEIR MOST NATURAL FORM AND AVOID PROCESSED FOODS

After eating a meal dental plaque is formed as bacteria in the mouth grow on particles of food that are left behind on the teeth. Plaque bacteria produce sticky, acidic waste products that damage the teeth causing cavities and damage the gums causing periodontal disease.

Processed foods consist of whole foods that have been broken down into much smaller particles than found in nature. Processed foods may also contain added sugars, starches and chemical ingredients that are used as flavor enhancers and preservatives. The act of grinding up whole foods into tiny particles increases the relative surface area of the food exposing embodied sugars to the environment. This is why a “smoothie” made up of ground-up whole foods often tastes much sweeter than the ingredients it contains.

After eating sugary processed foods residues left behind in the mouth encourage the explosive growth of plaque bacteria, which release tooth and gum damaging acids. Eating processed foods many times during the day turns the mouth into an acidic environment in which the mineral structure of the teeth dissolves away causing holes or cavities to form in the teeth.

To compound this issue, plaque and hardened plaque (referred to as tartar or calculus) cause irritation and inflammation of the gum tissue and loss of the bone supporting the teeth. Depending on the stage of development, this pathologic process is called gingivitis, periodontitis or periodontal disease.

Eat foods that are as close to their natural form as possible in order to avoid the damage caused by acid producing plaque bacteria. Eat plenty of whole fresh vegetables, whole fresh fruits, unprocessed meats, and whole grains; rather than foods like processed grains that have been pulverized, bleached and stripped of their nutrients.

EAT THREE MEALS A DAY WITH ONLY WATER BETWEEN MEALS

The mouth should be at a neutral pH level for as much of the day as possible. Continual snacking through the day lowers the pH within the mouth, causing an acidic oral environment. It is best to only eat three meals a day with no between-meal snacks leaving four to five hour fasting periods. If you must eat a between-meal snack it should only be comprised of whole foods, such as nuts, vegetables or meats.

During meals the body produces saliva, which helps to break down food and start the digestion process. After eating saliva continues to flow, washing away food residues and returning the mouth to a neutral pH level. Eating too often interrupts this process.

Drink plenty of pure clean water all day long to stay hydrated and wash away residual food particles. When you choose to drink other beverages such as juices, coffee, teas or even soft drinks (which I do NOT recommend) have them with your meals to minimize the impact they have on the acidity of the mouth.