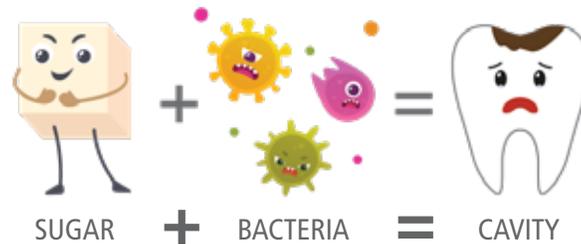




Snacking and Dental Health

How does snacking lead to cavities?

The main causes of cavities are sugar and plaque. Plaque is a sticky film that forms on your teeth every day. It contains bacteria (germs) that stick to your teeth. When sugar from your food and drinks combines with bacteria, it produces an acid. That acid damages the hard outer layer (enamel) of the teeth. When the damage is severe it creates a hole (cavity).



A GUIDE FOR GOOD DENTAL HEALTH

- Choose snacks that are nutritious and with no sugar added.
- Try to reduce the amount of snacking time during the day.
- Read the list of ingredients when choosing snacks. Raw cane sugar, honey, molasses, corn or maple syrup, glucose and fructose are all types of sugar.
- Limit sweets to special occasions served only at mealtime. The increased flow of saliva during a meal helps wash away sugars!
- Avoid sipping sweet drinks for a long period of time, sucking on a candy or chewing sugared gum.
- Avoid sticky foods, such as cereal bars and dried fruits, because they stay on the surface of teeth longer.
- Carry a refillable water bottle wherever you go.
- Pack snacks ahead of time to avoid temptation.

SOME HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS

- Cheese
- Yogurt
- Milk
- Smoothie
- Pita bread and hummus
- Nuts and seeds (for older children)
- Whole grain crackers
- Fresh vegetables and fruits

For more healthy lunch and snack ideas, visit [Parenting in Ottawa](#).

IT IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO AVOID SUGAR. HERE IS HOW TO PROTECT YOUR TEETH DURING AND AFTER SNACKING:

- Rinse your mouth with water or chew sugar-free gum when brushing is not possible.
- Replace sugary drinks with water. Make water your drink of choice.
- Brush your teeth at least twice per day with a fluoridated toothpaste and floss daily.

