

Tooth-Friendly Foods for Kids

A balanced diet helps your child build a healthy body — and that includes strong teeth. It also helps keep little gums in good shape. On the other hand, eating too many sugars and starches can increase your child’s risk of tooth decay.

Below are some tips on helping your child make smart food choices:

- Serve your child a variety of healthful foods. Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and milk and dairy products. Also include protein foods, such as lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Notice when your child eats foods with sugar or starch in them. Sugar is found not only in sweets, but also in fruits, some vegetables, most milk products, and most processed foods—even some that don’t taste sweet. Starch is found in breads, crackers, pasta, and many snack foods. The goal is not to cut out all these foods. Instead, aim to choose and use them wisely.
- Serve sugary or starchy foods with a meal rather than by themselves. Since more saliva is released during a meal, it helps wash food particles off the teeth. This reduces the chance for cavities.
- Limit the number of snack times during the day. When your child does snack, offer him or her nutritious foods. Kid-pleasing examples include cheese, raw veggies, plain yogurt, or a piece of fruit.
- Read food labels. Avoid foods and drinks with lots of added sugar, such as soft drinks, candy, and other sweets. Also skip the high-starch, low-nutrition snacks, such as chips.
- Beware of sticky foods, such as chewy candy. These foods are not easily washed away by a drink or saliva. As a result, they have high cavity-causing potential.

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