

## **DIET AND DENTAL HEALTH**

The key factors in maintaining optimal dental health are both effective home care and a 'tooth-friendly' **diet**. Diet over many hundreds of years has been hugely refined and with this there has been a very significant decline in dental health. But with better education on diet, home care and with the use of fluoride today's generations are again experiencing a noted improvement in overall dental health.

SUGARS in our diets are the most damaging in terms of tooth decay. The sugar adheres to our teeth in the form of plaque, which in turn is metabolised by certain bacteria in our mouths to produce acid, which damages our teeth. It is important to keep this soft plaque build-up to a minimum, which is what we aim to do by cleaning our teeth. When cleaning, it is necessary to clean all the surfaces of every tooth in our mouth; this is achieved by both brushing (2 minute minimum, twice daily) and flossing. The brushing will clean the outside surfaces and then flossing will clean the surfaces in between your teeth where the toothbrush cannot reach.

The more sugary food you consume the more potential plaque build-up you have and hence the more potential there is for tooth decay. The main offenders we see all too often here at **Eastbourne Dental Centre** are the sugar-laden drinks. The energy drinks, sports drinks and most carbonated drinks are full of the potentially damaging sugars and are the main offenders. The worst offenders of all are the 'cola' drinks. Not only do they contain excessive amounts of sugar but they also contain ACID that will act to erode tooth enamel. You may think that if you drink the 'diet', low sugar versions that this is ok, however this is often not the case eg. 'Diet colas', again being very acidic and damaging. The best drink choice of all is of course WATER.

It is important to limit not only the amount, but also very importantly the frequency of sugary foods. If you are to consume sugary foods try not to 'graze' on them as this is constantly exposing your teeth to the damaging substances, it is better to have them all at once and better to have them at meal times and only occasionally at that.

Sugar-free gums are an excellent adjunct to our oral health care routines. By chewing sugar-free gum (for a minimum of 20mins at a time) we act to increase our salivary flow, which acts to fight tooth-decay.

For individual 'tooth-friendly' dietary advice and all other oral health inquiries, please contact **Eastbourne Dental Centre, Cnr Marine Pde and Rimu St, ph. 562 7506.**