

Dietary Advice

Tooth decay is caused by the interaction of sugar and dental plaque (the sticky film of bacteria on the surface of the teeth).

- Dental plaque forms continuously on the tooth surface.
- Each time sugar enters the mouth it is converted into acid by plaque bacteria.
- Acid attacks the teeth for approximately 30 minutes after each intake of sugar.
- Regular snacking on sugary foods and drinks greatly increases the frequency of acid attack and is much more likely to lead to tooth decay.

However sugar is present in higher quantities than we think in many foods that we consume daily:

PRODUCT	PORTION	SUGAR (TSP)
Chocolate biscuits	2 biscuits	2.5
Rich tea biscuit	2 biscuits	1
Tinned rice pudding	½ can	4.5
Kellogs Cornflakes	30g	0.5
Kellogs Frosties	30g	3.0
Heinz Ketchup	2 tablespoon	2.0
BBQ Sauce	2 tablespoons	3.0
Baked Beans	200g	2.5
Kellogs Nutri-grain (strawberry)	1 bar	3.0
Alpen (strawberry and yoghurt)	1 Bar	2.5
Jordans Frusli	1 Bar	2.5
Coca-Cola	1 can	9.0
Sprite	1 can	8.0
Cough sweets	1 sweet	1.0

There are no hard and fast rules on how many times a day people can safely eat and drink sugars without damaging their teeth. Sensible advice for most people is to limit their sugar intake to mealtimes only.

On food labels look out for ingredients such as:

- Sucrose
- Maltose
- Molasses
- Fructose
- Glucose
- Dextrose
- Concentrated fruit juice
- Honey
- Maple Syrup
- Agave Syrup
- Invert Sugar
- Corn sugar

These are all sugars – it is easy to be misled by the manufacturers.

Fizzy Drinks:

Fizzy drinks are the largest single source of sugar consumption for children aged 11-18, and they provide an average of 29% of daily sugar intake

Sugar-free fizz is still bad for teeth: The fizz in sugar-free drinks is still acidic, and can cause tooth erosion, so it's much better to switch to tooth-friendly alternatives like water, milk, or a small serving of diluted fruit juice - but this is best consumed with a meal, to avoid the erosive acidity of the fruit juice.

Avoid energy drinks: They are usually highly acidic and can contain as much as 20 teaspoons of sugar!!

Remember these simple rules.

- 1 Limit sugary foods and drinks to meal times only.
- 2 Brush your teeth with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day. Do not rinse your mouth after brushing- just spit out.
- 3 Clean between your teeth with floss or interdental brushes at least once a day.
- 4 If you wish to use a mouthwash then make sure it contains fluoride otherwise you are simply rinsing away the beneficial effect of the fluoride in the toothpaste.
- 5 Visit your dentist regularly.