

Happy New Year! From all of us at Dental Health Services

It all starts with Nutrition

Your individual nutrition and calorie needs depend on your age, gender, level of physical activity and other health factors, but according to MyPlate, a website from the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, an agency of U.S. Department of Agriculture, a balanced and healthy diet should include:

Fruits and vegetables. Combined, these should cover half your plate at meals.

Grains. At least half of the grains you eat should be whole grains, such as oatmeal, whole wheat bread and brown rice.

Dairy. Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy foods most often.

Protein. Make lean protein choices, such as lean beef, skinless poultry and fish. Vary your protein choices to also include eggs, beans, peas and legumes. Eat at least eight ounces of seafood a week.

In addition to diet, it's also important to stay active for good health.

Adults should get at least two and a half hours of moderate-intensity physical activity every week.

What is the connection with our teeth?

Cheese, milk, plain yogurt, calcium-fortified tofu, leafy greens and almonds, are foods that may benefit tooth health thanks to their high amounts of calcium and other nutrients they provide. Protein-rich foods like meat, poultry, fish, milk and eggs are the best sources of phosphorus. Both of these minerals play a critical role in dental health, by protecting and rebuilding tooth enamel.

Fruits and vegetables are good choices for a healthy smile since they are high in water and fiber, which balance the sugars they contain and help to clean the teeth. These foods also help stimulate saliva production, which washes harmful acids and food particles away from teeth and helps neutralize acid, protecting teeth from decay. Plus, many contain vitamin C (important for healthy gums and quick healing of wounds) and vitamin A (another key nutrient in building tooth enamel).

Hands down, water—particularly fluoridated water- is the most tooth-friendly beverage.

I Can't Believe it's Not Sugar!

Sugar substitutes may look and taste like sugar but they don't promote decay-causing acids in your mouth that can harm teeth. There are many types of sugar substitutes, including aspartame, erythritol, saccharin, sucralose, isomalt, sorbitol, acesulfame potassium and mannitol. You might recognize some of these names from ingredient lists on food packages, or know some of them by their brand names (Splenda, Equal and Sunett).

Always consult with your Physician to make sure any dietary choices are right for you!

Let's say you're craving dessert.

You grab a cookie after dinner to feed your sweet-tooth.

You reach for a piece of sugarless gum, after you have your cookie.

This way you prevent sweet-tooth remorse and clean your teeth at the same time.

Waiting about 20 minutes after a meal helps your body determine if it's really still hungry. Studies also show that chewing sugarless gum for 20 minutes after eating can reduce your risk of cavities.

Look for sugarless gums that have the ADA Seal of Approval!



Talk to your Plan's Participating Dentist for Nutritional and Oral Health advice that may better serve you and your family in maintaining healthy gums and teeth. And don't forget to brush and floss as your dentist or hygienist recommends.

other things to consider especially when it comes to children's health

Undiagnosed and untreated oral conditions may interfere with a child's ability to eat, sleep, or function well at home or at school due to discomfort or pain. Teeth with caries look unpleasant and dental malocclusion (a child's bite), and misaligned teeth (such as "buck teeth") may compromise a child's self-esteem and social development. Studies have shown that children who have their dental conditions corrected have improved learning and attendance in school. And the effects on their self-esteem and social interactions should not be neglected. A beautiful and healthy smile is not solely beneficial to adults. And, dental care is medically necessary and oral health is an integral part of a child's (and an adult's) general health.

Speaking of Bad Habits:

You know that smoking is bad for your health, so it should not be surprising that cigarettes, and other tobacco products, such as chewing tobacco, are also harmful to your teeth. For one, tobacco products can cause bad breath, but that is just the beginning. Other possible harmful effects of smoking and all tobacco products are:

- stained teeth
- dulled sense of taste and smell
- slow healing after a tooth extraction or other surgery
- difficulties in correcting cosmetic dental problems
- gum disease
- and worst of all, oral cancer

Quitting is the only way to decrease your risk of these and other tobacco-related health problems. The addictive quality of nicotine, found in cigarettes, cigars and chewing tobacco, can make this especially difficult. That's why it's important to have a plan and a support network, people to help you stick to your plan. Write down your reasons for quitting. Exercising, chewing gum and keeping yourself occupied can help you quit. Talk to your dentist or doctor to see if the medications available would help you to stop using tobacco.

For Parents of School Children:

According to the American Association of Pediatric Dentists, "State laws and local school district policies are not uniform on absences from school for dental appointments. Such policies should not restrict healthcare delivery, including that of oral health services. It is encouraged that parents, school administrators, and dentists work together to ensure that children receive dental care while minimizing school absences. Schools' policies that prevent or discourage legitimate school absence for the purpose of delivery of vital health care services may cause harm to their students."

Let's all be advocates for children's oral health.

