

Healthy school smiles

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With everybody so busy with back to school shopping and planning a new school year for your kids, there is one important thing not to forget... your kid's teeth. This will become very important when school pictures come along so why not start today for those healthy smiles. Ninety-four percent of all children age 17 and under have had a cavity. To many, cavities are to be expected from eating too much junk food in combination with poor brushing habits. As the new school year approaches and plans of quick breakfast foods and sack lunches linger, it is important for you as parents to understand the correlation between dental cavities and diet.

Dental cavities are caused by bacterial infections. Bacteria are always present in the mouth in the form of the sticky substance, most commonly known as plaque. The bacteria in the plaque grow and mature by breaking down food sources from our diet. These bacteria produce a harmful acid byproduct that breaks down, or demineralizes, the enamel covering our teeth. This break down is the beginning of a cavity.

Diet has a strong correlation to the amount of acid that bacteria are capable of producing in the mouth. Plaque bacteria produce greater levels of acid when exposed to foods such as: breads, sugary foods, sticky foods and soda. Not only do the types of foods play a role in cavity formation but also the amount and frequency of the snacking. Because sugar products are highly available in schools, children tend to consume a lot of sugary foods throughout the day. Packing snacks from home and a healthy sack lunch is a better alternative to the sugary, cavity causing vending machine foods.

As this new school year begins keep in mind the importance of healthy

snacking and eating regular, balanced meals. School children who eat balanced meals and, specifically children who have a healthy breakfast daily, are at a decreased risk for early childhood cavities. Just as well, children who do not eat balanced meals consisting of five servings of fruits and vegetables have a higher prevalence of dental cavities. Maintaining a healthy and routine meal schedule for both you and your family will not only play a role in decreasing your caries risk but also will improve your oral health as well as your overall quality of life.

see SMILES, D4

SMILES from D3

With our busy school schedules, sports, music lessons and countless other activities filling up the calendar, don't forget routine dental cleanings and dentist exams. Between visits remember to brush at least twice per day, floss regularly and rinse with water after snacking and eating meals on the go. Following all these suggestions you'll be pleased to see a broad smile of pearly whites in your child's next school photo.

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