

Better Nutrition Helps Kids in More Ways Than One

With obesity affecting adult Americans in near-epidemic proportions, medical and dental professionals are looking to children and adolescents to stem the tide. Dentists are especially concerned with the “snack and sip” trend in which junk foods and sugary drinks make up the majority of kids’ nutritional intake. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) are stressing that there is no time like the present to start improving youngsters’ diets.

Sweetened beverages and unhealthy snacks cause a myriad of problems:

- These substances create excess bacteria in the mouth, which increases tooth decay.
- Tooth decay, which affects 50% of all children, is the single most chronic childhood disease.
- Children habitually suffering from poor nutrition score lower on standardized tests, get sick more often, and tend to fall behind in school.

However, combating these problems is easily assimilated into a child’s routine:

- A diverse supply of fun-to-eat, tasty snacks, such as yogurt, fresh fruit, or peanut butter-filled celery sticks, will divert kids from more sugar laden fare.
- Get creative with school lunches – pick a variety of colorful and healthy foods that are fun to look at and to eat.
- If a child must have a snack, combine the snack with a meal. Snacks and sugary drinks are less harmful when the saliva produced while eating helps neutralize acid production.
- Ask your school to reduce the number of poor choices offered in vending machines and in the cafeteria.
- Find ways to get kids off the couch, away from the computer and video games. Encourage them to play outside!

Dental exams are so important to overall health that both the AAPD and AAP strongly recommend that routine dental exams be included in a child’s regular health regimen beginning by their first birthday. Better nutrition will lead to better dental health benefiting children of all ages.

Patricia A. Carta, D.M.D.
Pediatric Dentistry
583 Saybrook Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: 860-347-4681
www.doctorpat.com