



Focus on Oral Health

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Steps to a Healthier You

Just as children's eating habits affect the way their bodies grow, they also determine how their teeth develop and how healthy their smile is. Because calcium helps build strong teeth and bones, children should get three servings of calcium-rich dairy foods each day. Use *MyPyramid* to make daily nutrition choices of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, which are all natural teeth cleaners. Fluoride, which usually comes from water, is important to keep teeth strong and cavity free. Check bottled waters for fluoride supplementation or just drink tap water. Go easy on between-meal snacks. When you do snack, try to eat the snack at one time rather than nibbling on it over a long period. If possible, brush right after eating. If brushing is not possible, rinse your mouth well with water after eating.



Foods containing naturally occurring sugars and starches or foods with added sugars also can promote tooth decay. Added sugars are sugars and syrups added to foods in processing or preparation, not the naturally occurring sugars in foods like fruit or milk. Foods containing added sugars provide calories, but may have few vitamins and minerals. In the United States, the number-one source of added sugars is non-diet soft drinks (soda or pop). Sweets, candies, cakes, cookies and fruit drinks are also major sources of added sugars. Limit your use of these beverages and foods. Some foods with added sugars — like chocolate milk, sweetened cereals and sweetened canned fruits — also are high in vitamins and minerals. The Nutrition Facts Label on foods gives the content of sugars from all sources (naturally occurring sugars plus added sugars, if any). You can use the Nutrition Facts Label to compare the amount of total sugars with similar products. To find out if sugars have been added, you need to look at the food label ingredient list.

The amount of bacteria in your mouth and lack of exposure to fluorides also promote tooth decay. These bacteria use sugars and starches to produce the acid that causes tooth decay. The more often you eat foods that contain sugars and starches and the longer these foods remain in your mouth before you brush your teeth, the greater your risk for tooth decay.

Frequent eating or drinking sweet or starchy foods between meals is more likely to harm teeth than eating the same foods at meals and then brushing. Daily dental hygiene, including brushing with fluoride toothpaste and flossing, and adequate intake of fluorides will help prevent tooth decay.

Follow the simple tips listed here to keep your teeth and gums healthy:

- *Maintain a healthy diet high in whole grains, low-fat dairy, fruits and vegetables and low in sweetened foods and drinks.
- *Limit between-meal snacks, especially those high in sugar. If you do eat them, brush your teeth afterward to reduce risk of tooth decay.
- *Drink plenty of water and ask your dentist or health-care provider about the need for supplemental fluoride if your drinking water is not fluoridated.
- *Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste that has the American Dental Association's Seal of Acceptance.
- *Floss daily and get regular dental checkups and cleanings.

Sources: *The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) MyPyramid
American Dietetic Association

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Oral Health Program
Division of Family Health
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600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200

State Health Officer: Dr. Terry Dwelle

Deputy State Health Officer: Arvy Smith

Division Director: Kim Senn

Program Director: Kimberlie Yineman

Program Manager/Editor: Cheryl Masset



Soda Pop and Other Sweetened Drinks– Dangerous for Your Teeth

Health problems associated with high intake of sweetened drinks include (1) overweight attributable to additional calories in the diet, (2) displacement of milk consumption, resulting in calcium deficiency that can lead to increased risk for osteoporosis and bone fracture, and (3) tooth decay and enamel erosion.

Sweetened drinks (fruitades, fruit drinks, soft drinks, sports drinks and energy drinks) constitute the primary source of added sugar in the daily diet of children. Each sugared soft drink consumed daily has been associated with an increase in a child's body mass index and an increase in the risk of obesity. Soda pop consumption has increasingly become a factor in dental disease. The most severe effects are seen in individuals who drink several cans a day. Teens and young adults are particularly at risk since they are the biggest consumers of soda pop. At least 20 percent of school-age children consume a minimum of four soda servings every day, and some teenagers drink as many as 12 cans of soda a day. Everybody seems to be drinking more soda pop and drinking it more frequently. The typical serving has gone from 6.5 ounces in 1950 to 20 ounces in the 1990s. This has created a public health crisis, which has been recognized by a number of professional organizations.



A typical 12 ounce can of naturally sweetened soda pop yields the equivalent of 10 to 12 teaspoons of sugar.

Soda pop has emerged as one of the most significant dietary sources of acid capable of producing demineralization (breakdown) of tooth enamel. High soda pop consumption is linked with extensive tooth decay.

One of the additional problems with the increase in soda pop is that it leads people to drink less milk, which indirectly leads to a higher incidence of demineralization of the teeth.

Some middle-schoolers and teens are showing up at dental offices with a problem more often associated with middle age: sensitive teeth, yellowing, or pitted teeth that are losing their protective enamel. Diagnosis: dental erosion.

There are two significant effects posed by soda pop and other sugary acidic beverages. First, the sugar content in pop sustains bacterial growth in the mouth and produces acid which promotes demineralization. Second, soda pop also exerts an effect on teeth by bathing the teeth in acid that is also capable of producing erosion. Some soda pops have an acidic pH. The pH scale ranges from 0 to 14 and measures how acidic or basic a substance is. A pH of 7 is neutral. Pure water has a pH of 7. The normal pH of saliva is about 6.3. When the pH in the mouth drops below 5.5 for long periods of time, the demineralization of the enamel leads to erosion and tooth decay. Brands of soda pop that contain artificial sweeteners still pose a significant threat because of their acid content that will contribute to demineralization of teeth. The more acidic the soda pop, the lower its pH.

Children and adults should avoid consuming large amounts of sweetened acidic drinks. They should drink more beverages that contain less sugar and acid, such as water, milk and 100 percent fruit juice.

Soda Pop with acidic pH	
Ginger ale	2.4
Coca Cola	2.7
Rootbeer	3.0
Orange Crush	3.1
Pepsi Cola	3.3
7-Up	3.5

Source: *An Update on the Dangers of Soda Pop: Gary J. Kaplowitz, DDS, MA, MEd*



North Dakota Oral Health Coalition Update

At its March 2008 meeting, the Oral Health Coalition approved bylaws and outlined key policy priorities for the next legislative session. The priorities include enhancement of the dental loan repayment program to include priority for new graduates working in safety net dental clinics in the state, funding and statute changes for a school-linked dental sealant program to reach high-risk children, and funding for a project developer to make the Ronald McDonald Charities Care Mobile Project operational. The Prevention, Integration and Access committees developed work plans for the priority issues chosen and the activities are outlined below. The Sustainability and Legislative committees are in the process of developing their work plans.

Prevention Committee

Goal: Prevent and reduce tooth decay among young children.

- Develop and distribute information on the benefits of community water fluoridation.
- Maintain school fluoride mouthrinse programs in communities with children at high risk for tooth decay.
- Implement fluoride varnish programs in clinics reaching high-risk infants and young children.
- Develop a school-linked dental sealant program in schools with children at high risk for tooth decay.
- Develop and implement an early childhood tooth decay prevention program that includes oral health risk assessment, oral health education and the application of fluoride varnish.

Integration Committee

Goal: Integrate oral health into overall health.

- Develop training programs and educational materials for medical professionals about oral health screening and risk-assessment techniques.
- Develop or acquire materials to integrate oral health training modules into medical professional curriculums.
- Integrate oral health into local public health unit activities.
- Promote the concept of the dental home for each child.

Access Committee

Goal: Improve access to oral health services for underserved and special populations.

- Assist the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Bismarck in securing a care mobile to provide dental services to high-risk children in North Dakota.
- Develop and implement a dental loan repayment program for safety net dental clinic providers.

If you are interested in more information about the Oral Health Coalition or would like to assist on a committee, visit www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/Coalition.htm or contact Kimberlie Yineman at 800.472.2286.



Join the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition

The North Dakota Oral Health Coalition (NDOHC) represents a wide range of public, private and nonprofit organizations and individuals interested in developing and promoting innovative strategies to achieve optimal oral health for all North Dakotans.

If you are interested in joining the coalition, complete and mail the application below or enroll over the phone by calling 701.328.2356 or 800.472.2286, press 1 (toll-free in North Dakota).

North Dakota Oral Health Coalition Membership Application

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Send to: North Dakota Oral Health Coalition, North Dakota Department of Health, 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301, Bismarck, ND 58505-0200.



Division of Family Health
North Dakota Department of Health
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

North Dakota Oral Health Consultants

Section 1 (Northwest Area)

Tracey Haugenoe, RDH
701.774.8708

Section 2 (North Central Area)

Sarah Zwilling, RDH, BS
320.492.7931

Section 3 (Northeast Area)

Hollie Harrington, RDH, BS
701.683.9072

Section 4 (Southwest Area)

Carla Kelly, RDH
701.523.3423

Section 5 (Southwest Central Area)

Marlene Hulm, RDH
701.663.7962

Section 6 (South Central Area)

Shelly Gunsch, RDH
701.663.8339

Section 7 (Southeast Area)

Hollie Harrington, RDH, BS
701.683.9072

- State Office -

Kimberlie Yineman
Cheryle Masset-Martz
800.472.2286 or 701.328.2356

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