

## Tips for a Healthy Diet and Healthy Snacks for Children

### **Q: What is a healthy diet for my child?**

**A:** A healthy diet is a balanced diet that naturally supplies all of the nutrients your child needs to grow. The following major food groups are included in a balanced diet:

- \*Fruits & Vegetables
- \*Breads & Cereals
- \*Mild & Dairy Products
- \*Meat, Fish & Eggs

### **Q: How does my child's diet affect their dental health?**

**A:** Your child must have a balanced diet for their teeth to develop properly and for healthy gum tissue around the teeth. A diet high in certain kinds of carbohydrates such as sugar and starches may place your child at a higher risk of tooth decay.

### **Q: How do I make my child's diet safe for their dental health?**

**A:** Check how frequently your child eats foods with sugar or starch in them. Foods with starch include bread, crackers, pasta, pretzels and potato chips. When checking for sugar, look beyond the sugar bowl and candy dish. A variety of foods contain one or more types of sugar and all types of sugar can promote dental decay. Fruits, some vegetables and most milk products all contain at least one type of sugar.

### **Q: Does a balanced diet assure my child is receiving enough fluoride for their dental health?**

**A:** No. A balanced diet does not guarantee the proper amount of fluoride for the development and maintenance of your child's teeth. If you do not live in an area where fluoride is in the water or have an ideal amount of naturally occurring fluoride in your well water, a fluoride supplement may be recommended during the years of tooth development. Your child's dentist will be able to determine how much supplemental fluoride your child may need based upon the amount of fluoride in your drinking water and your child's age and weight.

### **Q: My youngest child is not on solid foods yet. Do you have any preventive suggestions?**

**A:** Do not nurse your child to sleep or put them to bed with a bottle of milk, formula or any other sweetened liquid. While your child sleeps, the sweetened liquid supports bacteria that produces acid and adheres and "attacks" the teeth. Your child should not go to bed or sleep with anything other than a pacifier or water to assist in preventing severe tooth decay.

### **Q: Any final advice or tips?**

**A:** Yes, below are some additional tips for your child's diet and dental health:

1. Ask your child's dentist to assist you in assessing your child's diet.
2. Shop smart! Do not routinely stock your pantry with sugary or starchy foods or snacks. Save the "fun foods" for special occasions.
3. Limit the number of snacks your child has and choose nutritious snacks.
4. Provide a balanced diet and save food with sugar or starch for mealtimes only.
5. Do not put your young child to bed with a bottle or cup of milk or sweetened liquid. If your child must have a bottle or cup at bedtime, only give them water.
6. If your child chews gum or sips soda, choose those without sugar.
7. You should brush your child's teeth for them or always be there to assist them. Your child does not have the dexterity to properly brush by themselves until around age 8 or 9.
8. Your child's teeth should be brushed and flossed at least twice a day in the morning and at bedtime.