



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Before Packing Your Kid's School Lunch, Do Your Homework *That Lunch Can Pack a Sugar Punch*

Oak Brook, Ill. (August 21, 2010) – Parents spend days preparing for their children's return to school. Many schools now provide a long list of supplies that children are expected to have when they show up. As parents send their kids off for the first day of school, it's a good idea to put as much thought into what they're packing in their kids' lunchboxes as they do into their school supplies.

While parents wouldn't send children to school with a lunchbox full of candy bars, they might be packing almost as much sugar when they send them off with some of the popular lunch time classics. Considering that most children brush their teeth in the morning and again before bed, the sugar they put in their mouths at lunch time could stay in there for a while, and that worries some dentists.

"When you start adding up the sugars found in some of the most common lunch items, you might be shocked," said Fred Eichmiller, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. "Making a few simple changes can lower the sugar count, which is ultimately better for their bodies and their oral health."

Take, for example, the classic peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Toss in a box of raisins, a small container of applesauce and a single-serve carton of chocolate milk. While it sounds pretty healthy and balanced, the sugar total is a whopping 98 grams. An average candy bar contains about 25 grams of sugar.

Without making drastic changes, parents can give their children's lunches a sugar makeover.

Parents should look for natural peanut butter (made without added sugar) and low or no added sugar jelly. They could replace the white bread with whole wheat bread and the regular applesauce with some apple slices. Parents might also consider skipping the raisins – in addition to their high sugar content their stickiness can hold sugars against children’s teeth for prolonged periods of time. Instead, swap the raisins for some mini carrots and the chocolate milk for white milk. The new total? A more tooth-tolerable 31 grams of sugar.

It’s easy to find alternatives to a number of other lunchbox standards. A tube of yogurt is a good option for boosting calcium with only 10 grams of sugar. Even better is a piece of string cheese, which also offers calcium but with zero grams of sugar. A fruit roll-up style snack has half the amount of sugar (7 grams) as fruit snacks in a pouch (14 grams). For a special treat, replace three chocolate, crème-filled cookies (at 13 grams of sugar), with three vanilla wafer cookies (4 grams of sugar).

If not removed by brushing or other means, sugars in the mouth can contribute to tooth decay and cavities. Naturally occurring bacteria in the human mouth form a colorless, sticky film called plaque. Cavity-causing organisms within plaque feed on sugar and turn it into acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel and leads to tooth decay.

“It’s important for parents to read the nutrition labels on the foods they are buying since products and brands can vary greatly in sugar content,” says Dr. Eichmiller. “A healthy and nutritious diet, paired with good oral hygiene at home and preventive care visits to the dentist can all go a long way toward protecting children against tooth decay.”

The not-for-profit Delta Dental Plans Association (www.deltadental.com) based in Oak Brook, Ill., is the leading national network of independent dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to more than 54 million Americans in more than 93,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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