



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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School Lunch Packs a Sugar Punch *Simple School Lunch Makeover Can Bring Sugar Under Control*

Oak Brook, Ill. (August 21, 2008) -- You wouldn't send your children to school with a lunchbox full of candy bars, but you might be packing almost as much sugar when you 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 Max Anderson, 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 clocks in at a whopping 98 grams. An average candy bar contains about 25 grams of sugar.

Without making drastic changes, you can give your children's lunches a sugar makeover.

Look for natural peanut butter (made without added sugar) and low or no added sugar jelly. Replace the white bread with whole wheat bread, and the regular applesauce with natural applesauce. 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. 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.

“Products and brands can vary greatly in sugar content, so it’s important to read the nutrition labels on the foods you’re buying,” says Dr. Anderson. “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.”

Delta Dental Plans Association, based in Oak Brook, Ill., is a national network of independent not-for-profit dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 51 million Americans in more than 93,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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