



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Teach Kids to Snack Smart for Healthy Teeth *Mischievous munchies may take a toll on teeth*

Oak Brook, Ill. (Sept. XX, 2009) – The school bell rings and kids across America excitedly scatter, heading towards home, extracurricular activities or friends’ houses. But wherever they go, oftentimes an after-school snack is part of the deal.

Unfortunately, many popular snacks are packed with sweeteners that will leave kids’ teeth coated in cavity-causing sugar. Even seemingly healthy options can contain high amounts of sugar. One serving of applesauce or raisins contains as much as six teaspoons of sugar—the same as an average candy bar.

“Often, parents are surprised to find out that many natural snacks contain just as much sugar as candy,” said Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. “And if not removed by brushing or other means, sugars in the mouth can contribute to tooth decay and cavities.”

According to the American Heart Association, women shouldn’t eat more than six teaspoons of sugar a day, about the amount of sugar in a serving of applesauce or a candy bar, and men shouldn’t consume more than nine teaspoons a day. But on average, Americans consume 22.2 teaspoons of sugar each day.

This is why it’s important your kids learn how to snack smart. Follow these tips to help teach them how to protect their pearly whites:

- Pick low-sugar options like pretzels, cheese, crackers, pickles or nuts.
- Don’t allow your kids to graze. If they’re going to have a sugary snack, eating it in a short span limits the time their teeth are exposed. Continuous snacking subjects their teeth to sugar for a much longer time period.

- After snacking, encourage them to drink a glass of water to help wash away the sugar and neutralize the acid. Alternatively, chewing sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow has the same effect.
- Don't allow snacking after they've brushed their teeth at night. Sugar that's on their teeth when they go to bed will stay there until morning.
- Limit the consumption of sugary drinks like juice and soda. When they do drink them, provide a straw, which limits the sugary beverage's contact with teeth.

“Eating healthy, mouth-friendly snacks can be just as important to kids’ oral health as brushing and flossing,” said Anderson. “And because many habits acquired during childhood continue into adulthood, teaching kids smart snacking skills can improve their oral health for a lifetime.”

The not-for-profit Delta Dental Plans Association (www.deltadental.com) based in Oak Brook, Ill., is the leading national network of 39 independent dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 54 million Americans in more than 89,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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