Dental hygiene

March

Do the foods you eat help or hurt your teeth?

Some foods work with your teeth to make them stronger, while others break down enamel and cause cavities.

Teeth are happy when you:

> Choose a balanced diet of vegetables, lean protein, fruits, whole grains and low-fat dairy

> Eat calcium-rich foods, such as yogurt, almonds and dark green leafy vegetables

> Get lots of phosphorus, a mineral found in eggs, lean meat and dairy

> Consume plenty of vitamin C, from foods like broccoli and green or red peppers

Teeth are unhappy when you:

> Drink sugary beverages (lemonade, soda, sweetened coffee or tea)

> Eat empty-calorie foods (candies, cookies, chips)

> Choose too many acidic foods (citrus, dried fruits, tomatoes)

Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Dental Association

Trivia time:

What is the hardest tissue in your body?

Answer: The enamel covering your teeth

A healthy diet means a healthy smile

Everything that touches your teeth can strengthen them or wear them down. When the bacteria in your mouth feed off sugars, they release acids that cause tooth decay.

Eat calcium- and fiber-rich fruits and vegetables and lean proteins to build up enamel and defend against gum disease. Avoid sticky or starchy foods, such as dried fruit or potato chips, which get caught in teeth. Remember that dark liquids like coffee and red wine can stain your pearly whites. Drink water after snacks and meals to rinse out your mouth and help your saliva do its important job of fighting bacteria.

Sources: American Dental Association, Delta Dental, University of Rochester Medical Center

Stop cavities before they can start

One of the best ways to protect your teeth daily is through good nutrition. Remember to:

> Limit between-meal snacks

> Cut down sugar in your diet

> Include dairy and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables

> Drink water, especially after snacks and meals

> Brush your teeth twice daily

> Floss at least once a day, and aim to floss after every meal

Source: American Heart Association

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