



Nutrition and Oral Health Fact Sheet

FOR PROVIDERS

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The Challenge...

Existing data suggests there is a lifelong synergy between diet, nutrition, and integrity of the oral cavity in health and disease. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics supports the integration of oral health with nutrition services, education, and research.¹

Oral health and nutrition have a multifaceted relationship. Oral infectious diseases, as well as acute, chronic and systemic diseases with oral manifestations, affect an individual's functional ability to eat and their nutrition status. Likewise, nutrition and diet can affect the development and integrity of the oral cavity and progression of oral diseases.¹

What you need to know...

Oral health is related to diet in many ways, as nutrition influences craniofacial development, oral cancer, and oral infectious diseases.² Nutrition affects the teeth during development and malnutrition may exacerbate periodontal and oral infectious diseases. However, the most significant effect of nutrition on teeth is the local action of diet in the mouth on the development of dental caries and enamel erosion. Dental erosion is increasing and is associated with dietary acids, a major source of which is soft drinks.²

Evidence suggests that periodontal disease progresses more rapidly in undernourished individuals and the importance of nutrition in maintaining an adequate host immune response.³ Studies have shown associations between tooth loss and compromised diet.⁵

Ways You Can Help...

- Provide basic nutritional counseling, as outlined below, to highlight aspects that will promote oral health.
- Advise decreasing the consumption of all types of sugar-sweetened and carbonated beverages, and increasing fluoridated water intake.
- Promote the selection of whole, unprocessed foods, instead of those that are high in refined carbohydrates or added sugars, especially for people living in deprived and remote areas.
- Encourage breastfeeding. Among other important health benefits, breast milk prevents the occurrence of rampant early childhood dental caries, often the result of a child going to bed with a bottle or drinking from a bottle throughout the day.²
- Refer patients with complex medical and nutritional issues to a Registered Dietitian-Nutritionist for medical nutrition therapy.



Connecticut Fast Facts

- Approximately 32.2% of children (0-17 years old)¹ and 19.5% of adults (18 years old and older)² drink at least one sugar-sweetened beverage per day.
- Only 14.6% of high school students eat three or more vegetables per day and only 31.0% eat fruit or drink 100% fruit juice two or more times per day.³
- Only 17.7% of adults eat three or more vegetables per day and 32.2% eat fruit or drink 100% fruit juice two or more times per day.⁴

Footnotes:

1. <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/practice/position-and-practice-papers/position-papers/oral-health-and-nutrition>
2. http://www.who.int/oral_health/action/risks/en/
3. http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/public_health_nut7.pdf
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5584677/>

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