



Did you know sugar is a major cause of tooth decay? When you eat sugary foods or drink sodas during the day, the enamel that protects your teeth is exposed to acids. Hard candies, cough drops and breath mints are most harmful because they dissolve slowly in your mouth. Cavities can happen at any age and there are some foods you can eat to help protect your teeth. Foods high in fiber like celery, mangoes and winter squash act like nature's dental floss. They help keep the surfaces of your teeth clean while you eat.

Children need calcium when teeth are developing, but adults need calcium too. You need calcium to maintain the sockets that hold your teeth in place. It also helps to keep the jawbone and roots of your teeth from getting weak. Foods high in calcium like green leafy vegetables, yogurt, cheese, skim milk or a bowl of fortified cereal each day help to keep your teeth in place.

Gum disease is the leading cause of adult tooth loss. You may not eat enough foods with vitamin C or B vitamins. If you have mouth sores and your gums are puffy and red, you could have gum disease. The good news is that vitamin C and B vitamins are in many foods. When you eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains, you are protecting your gums.

Eating healthy is just one way to protect your teeth! You must still:

- Brush your teeth 2 times a day. Remember to brush your tongue.
- Get a new toothbrush every 3 months.
- Floss every day. Slide the floss up far enough so it reaches the gums.
- Use toothpaste, mouth rinses and products with fluoride.
- Avoid chewing hard candy or ice.
- See a dentist at least once a year. Only the dentist will be able to check for cavities and gum disease.