

How does sugar affect your dental health? - Smile Solutions

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How does sugar affect your dental health? It has been long proven that cutting down on sugar can have all-round benefits for your health. Excessive sugar consumption has been linked to heart disease, obesity, diabetes as well as bone problems such as osteoporosis. Apart from your bodily health, high sugar diets can also have an immense impact on your oral health. The higher your sugar intake is, the higher your chance of developing oral disease. And with almost half of all Australian adults exceeding the World Health Organisation's recommendation for sugar intake 1 , it is no surprise that research shows more than 1 in 3 Australian adults have undetected tooth decay, which makes this condition the most prevalent form of oral disease. How does sugar affect your dental health? It is important to understand that sugar (in any form) does not damage your teeth, it is the complex process whereby the natural bacteria in your mouth digest your dietary sugars to produce an acidic byproduct on your teeth. Without brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, this acid will dissolve the protective enamel layer on your teeth and result in dental caries (decay). If dental decay isn't managed early enough, it may result in cavities in your teeth and lead to infection of the pulp (nerve) of the tooth, after which your dentist may recommend a filling or root canal treatment to resolve the problem. Often at times, dental decay can progress with little to no symptoms, which allows cavities to form and teeth to become infected long before you can feel anything, which is why routine examinations and x-rays are recommended to catch this early. If bacteria in your mouth is not removed in time, it can also spread to the gums, leading to irritation and periodontal (gum) disease. The early stages of gum disease (known as gingivitis) can be resolved with good oral hygiene and professional cleans from your dental professional. Advanced gum disease (periodontitis) requires further complex treatment to prevent your gums from deteriorating to a point where you can permanently lose your teeth. Signs of gum disease can include red, itchy or swollen gums which bleed easily upon eating, brushing or flossing. It is important to note that, whilst it is impractical to cut out sugars from our diet, it is possible to mitigate its effects through the following: Check nutrition labels for sugar contents Avoid snacking throughout the day Keep hydrated during the day with plain water, especially before/after eating Use straws for sugary drinks, or opt for sugar-free alternatives After addressing the sugar in your diet, it is important to also maintain oral health with: Flossing to remove bacteria from between your teeth and under your gums Brushing twice a day with a Fluoride toothpaste Drinking fluoridated tap water Regular dental examinations and professional cleans Articles from Dr Avi Aggarwal View Blogs

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