

CANDY IS DANDY... but Tough on Teeth!

Candy is a tasty pleasure, but bacteria that cause cavities thrive on the treat. With care, however, candy and other sweet foods can be enjoyed while limiting the chances for tooth decay.

Harm to teeth comes from **the amount of time the sugar is in the mouth**, not just the amount of sugar in the treat. The worse items *stick* to the teeth while the less harmful products *wash away* more quickly.

The longer candy stays in the mouth or sticks on teeth, the more easily cavities can form.

Also, the more often candy is eaten, especially between meals, the worse it is for tooth health.

MORE HARMFUL TO TEETH are sweets that are sucked, stick to teeth, or dissolve slowly. These stay on teeth longer:

suckers, lollipops and hard candies, toffee and nut brittles, taffy, caramel corn, gum drops, chocolate bars with rice cereal, nougat or nut brittles, candy-coated chocolate, candy corn, dried fruit, fruit "roll-ups," chocolate-covered raisins, "high-energy" candy bars or sport bars.

LESS HARMFUL items melt quickly in the mouth or don't have sugars that stay in the mouth:

plain chocolate pieces, chocolate with nuts, chocolate peppermint patties, marshmallow, "gummi" candy, licorice, "diabetic" or "dietetic" candy, sugarless gum.

Other less sticky treats include nuts, popcorn, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, and fresh juicy fruit such as apples, berries and melon.

REMEMBER, no candy is perfectly safe for teeth, but these ideas will help reduce the risk of tooth decay:

1 Have the sweets with a meal. The other meal-time foods and saliva help clean sugar from teeth.

2 Plan sweets so they are eaten all at once and not throughout the day. This limits the number of times teeth are coated with sugars.

Some parents let the children eat as much candy as they can at one time, and throw away the rest, then have the kids brush and floss.

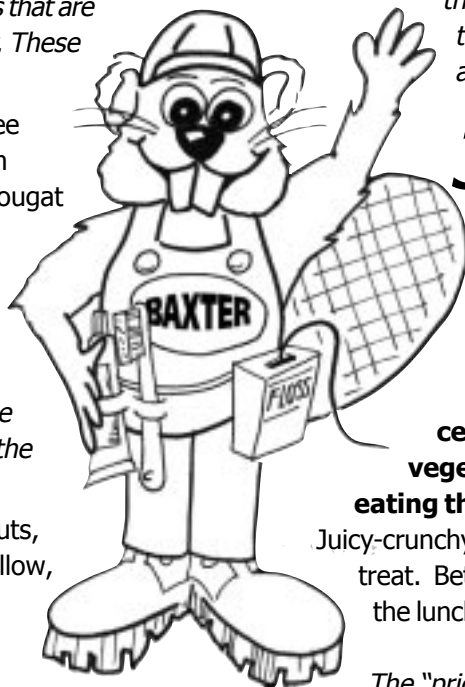
3 Serve cheese or milk following the candy.

Cheese and milk have anti-cavity effects and help counteract sugar's harmful effects on teeth.

4 Right after the candy, munch raw carrots, celery, apples or other wet-crisp vegetables and fruits, especially if eating the sweets in a school lunch.

Juicy-crunchy foods help clean teeth after a sticky treat. Better yet, pack a toothbrush right in the lunch box.

The "price" of eating the sweet is brushing teeth right after the treat is finished.



Enjoy candy but protect teeth: clean them right after eating the treat.

Baxter...Eager Beaver for Dental Health



County of San Diego

