

We give you
more reasons to
smile

You, Your Diet, & Your Oral Health



Parents throughout the ages have said to their children: “You’d better eat that, it’s good for you!” Here’s another favorite: “Don’t eat that, it’ll rot your teeth!” Today, Americans face a bewildering array of food choices that range from fresh produce to sugar-laden processed convenience meals and snack foods. What we eat and when we eat it may affect not only our general health, but also our oral health.¹

Make healthy choices

The more often you eat and the longer foods stay in your mouth, the more damage occurs.² Dr. Miles Hall, National Dental Director for CIGNA Dental, offers these tips to maintain your smile:

- **Snack wisely.** Focus on eating healthy, nutritious and satisfying meals; but if you must snack, choose fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products. Avoid hard candy, mints and sticky sweets that stay in your mouth for a long time. After treats, drink plenty of water to dilute the acid attacks.
- **Limit sugar and starch.** Sugary and starchy foods cause the bacteria in plaque to produce acids that break down tooth enamel, which may eventually cause decay. Eating a bit of Cheddar, Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese stimulates saliva production, which helps neutralize these acids.
- **Protect your teeth.** Don’t chew ice or popcorn kernels. Don’t use your teeth as tools. And avoid tobacco: studies suggest it may cause gum disease.

The hard truth about soft drinks

- 1 of every 4 beverages consumed in America today is a soft drink.
- Soft-drink consumption surpasses that of all other beverages, including milk, beer, coffee and water.
- Some non-diet soft drinks contain as many as 11 teaspoons of sugar per serving.
- Studies show that higher consumption of sugary soft drinks is associated with the increased risk of developing tooth decay.

Tooth decay remains a problem because plaque (a sticky film of bacteria) constantly forms on our teeth. When we eat foods or drink beverages that contain sugar or starch, the bacteria in the plaque produce acids that attack tooth enamel. The stickiness of plaque then keeps the harmful acids against your teeth. This can contribute to tooth decay.³

Indulge yourself: brush, floss, & see your dentist!

- **Use fluoride toothpaste.** Brush at least twice a day, and always at bedtime; replace your soft-bristled brush every 3-4 months (earlier if it is frayed).
- **Floss daily.** A toothbrush cannot clean between teeth.
- **Visit your dentist regularly.** Have periodic cleanings to reduce damaging tartar buildup and ask your dentist if you are brushing and flossing properly.

For more information, visit us on the web at www.cigna.com

“CIGNA Dental” refers to the following operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation: Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. and its operating subsidiaries and affiliates. This document is provided by CIGNA solely for informational purposes to promote consumer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. CIGNA assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations.

