Health & Wellness

Summer Parties Can Bring Summer Cavities and More

Top Five Ways to Keep a Healthy Summer Smile
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Lata Stefano, D.D.S. and
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in Sandusky, Ohio, highlights
some simple techniques to
make some healthy eating
choices this summer and how
to avoid summer cavities when
summer parties and picnics are
abundant.

1. Low pH value - Frequently consuming foods with a low pH value, such as soft drinks, fruit
juices, pickles, fresh fruit and yogurt can lead to
irreversible dental erosion according to the
Academy of General Dentistry. Dental erosion is
the breakdown of tooth structure caused by the
effect of acid on the teeth. Dental enamel is the thin,
outer layer of hard tissue that helps maintain the
tooth’s structure and shape while protecting it from
decay.

Acids found in common foods:
* Soft drinks - phosphoric acid - even DIET soda
  has this.
* Fruit and fruit products - citric and malic acids
* Fermented products (yogurt) - lactic acid
* Grapes and wines - tartaric acid
After eating or drinking:
* Chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow.
* Rinse with water for 30 seconds.
* Use fluoride toothpaste.

2. Immune System - People with lowered immune
systems have been shown to be at higher risk for
periodontal disease. Additionally, research shows a
link between oral health and systemic conditions,
such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Dry
mouth or xerostomia can be a side effect of many
medications and due to the lack of saliva flow, cavities
can form easier. So watch the acidic foods here
also. Eating a variety of foods as part of a well-balanced
diet may not only improve your dental
health, but increasing fiber and vitamin intake may
also reduce the risk of other diseases.

3. Snacks - Always keep your mouth moist by
drinking lots of water. Saliva protects both hard and
soft oral tissues. If you have a dry mouth, supple-
ment your diet with sugarless candy or gum to
stimulate saliva. Foods that cling to your teeth pro-
mote tooth decay. So when you snack, avoid soft,
sweet, sticky foods such as cakes, candy and dried
fruits, including raisins. Instead, choose dentally
healthy foods such as nuts, raw vegetables, plain
yogurt, cheese and sugarless gum or candy.
When you eat fermentable carbohydrates, such as

4. Consult your Dentist - If the health of your
teeth is ever in question, don’t hesitate to contact
your dentist for a consultation and schedule a
hygiene visit and oral cancer screening every six
months. Remember, even if you have full dentures,
your gums and soft tissue in your mouth should be
examined annually for oral cancer. If detected early,
this is very treatable. The advice from an expert is
essential. Make sure you use sunscreen on your lips
also. Sun exposure and foods high in acid like
tomatoes and citrus fruits can trigger cold sores to
emerge if you are prone to them. Lip balm with SPF
will protect your lips from burning as well. Your
lips can develop skin cancer just as any other area of
your body.

5. Sugar/High Fructose Corn Syrup - Living in a
culture that moves as quickly as ours, it’s easy to
bypass a nutritious diet in favor of a diet comprised
of fast food and snacks high in sugar. The detri-
mental effects of this lifestyle are clear. According to
the Academy of General Dentistry, more than 25
percent of children between the ages of 2 and 5 have
experienced tooth decay, and almost 80 percent of
young people have had a cavity by age 17. Check
your labels; it seems many foods and beverages
have high fructose corn syrup as an ingredient.

For example, the average 12-ounce can of soda
contains 10 teaspoons of sugar; and many manufac-
turers incorporate sugar into their foods to help
ensure a return purchase. Today, the average person
consumes approximately 150 pounds of sugar a
year, or about 40 teaspoons a day. It’s not only our
culture that defines the amount of sugar we con-
sume, but also a lack of education on how much
sugar we consume every day - especially when it
comes to children and the elderly.

For questions about this article or for more infor-
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