



AMERICA'S PEDIATRIC DENTISTS
THE BIG AUTHORITY on little teeth®

November 28, 2017
United States Department of Agriculture
Department of Health and Human Services

RE: 2020 Dietary Guidelines
Recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
(For more information, contact Dr. Robin Wright, rwright@aapd.org)

Tooth decay is the most common chronic early childhood disease in the United States, affecting nearly half of children by age five.¹ It is completely preventable, and critically important factors in preventing cavities in young children are diet and nutrition. On behalf of the 10,000 members of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) and our nation's children, we offer the following nutritional and dietary recommendations to promote the oral and overall health of children.

Breastfeed your baby up to age one.

Breastfeeding infants prior to 12 months of age helps to ensure the best possible health, developmental and psychosocial outcomes for infants. However, children breastfed more than 12 months have an increased risk of tooth decay.²

If you put your baby to bed with a bottle, use only water.

Frequent night-time bottle-feeding with milk, juice and other sugar-containing liquids are associated with early childhood tooth decay.³ When a child is given a bottle with sugar-containing drinks, the teeth are under attack by bacterial acid for extended periods, which can cause cavities.

Limit sugar-containing beverages.

Sugar is a contributing factor for tooth decay, especially when consumed with high frequency, such as between-meal snacks and the habitual use of sippy cups.⁴ We support the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics that fruit juice should not be introduced to infants before one year of age, and it should be limited to four ounces a

¹ US Department of Health and Human Services. Oral health in America: A report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.

² Tham R, Bowatte G, Dharmage SC, et al. Breastfeeding and the risk of dental caries: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Acta Paediatr* 2015;104(467):62-84.

³ Slayton RL, Fontana M, Young D, et al. Dental caries management in children and adults. Institute of Medicine, 2016; National Academy of Medicine, Washington, D.C.

⁴ Tinanoff NT, Kanellis MJ, Vargas CM. Current understanding of the epidemiology, mechanism, and prevention of dental caries in preschool children. *Pediatr Dent* 2002;24(6):543-51.

Page 2, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

day for children ages 1–3 years.⁵ In addition, the AAPD urges parents to reduce the amount of sugar-containing beverages to lower the calories that children consume each day, including soda drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, and sweetened milk or milk alternatives.

Reduce sugar consumption.

Along with a number of national and international organizations, the AAPD recommends that the sugar intake of children should be less than ten percent of total energy intake and, to reduce children’s risk of weight gain and tooth decay, sugar intake should be less than five percent of total energy intake.⁶

Get the right amount of fluoride.

The right amount of fluoride is important to all children, including infants once the teeth start coming in. (Fluoride has been shown to reduce tooth decay by as much as 50 to 70 percent.⁷) The AAPD strongly supports community water fluoridation as a safe and effective way to prevent tooth decay and protect a child’s smile throughout life. Parents should brush their young child’s teeth twice a day with a rice-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste.⁸

Take your baby for a dental visit by the first birthday.

The age-one visit provides parents with information for a healthy smile, including the role of diet and nutrition in the causes and prevention of oral diseases. Dental professionals are becoming more engaged in identifying children who consume frequent or large quantities of sugar-containing foods and beverages and/or who are at risk for obesity, as well as providing appropriate referrals to pediatricians or nutritional specialists.⁹

In summary, the pain from tooth decay hinders many children from eating, speaking, playing, learning, and even getting a good night’s sleep. Every child’s smile deserves protection and care, and strong nutritional and dietary recommendations will promote better oral health in young children and help establish positive health behaviors for a lifetime.

⁵ Heyman MB, Abrams SA. Fruit juice in infants, children, and adolescents: Current recommendations. *Pediatrics* 2017;139(6):1-8.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC guide to strategies for reducing the consumption of sugarsweetened beverages. Available at: “http://www.cdc.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/StratstoReduce_Sugar_Sweetened_Bevs.pdf”

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recommendations for using fluoride to prevent and control dental caries in the United States. *MMWR Recomm Rep* 2001;50(RR14):1-42.

⁸ American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Guideline on fluoride therapy. *Pediatr Dent* 2016;38(special issue): 181-4.

⁹ Wright R, Casamassimo PS. Assessing the attitudes and actions of pediatric dentists toward childhood obesity and sugar-sweetened beverages. *J Pub Health Dent* 2017; 77(Suppl. 1):S79-S87.

About the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is the recognized authority on children's oral health. As advocates for children's oral health, the AAPD promotes evidence-based policies, best practices, and clinical guidelines; educates and informs policymakers, parents and guardians, and other health care professionals; fosters research; and provides continuing professional education for pediatric dentists and general dentists who treat children. Founded in 1947, the AAPD is a not-for-profit professional membership association representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. Its 10,000 members provide primary care and comprehensive dental specialty treatments for infants, children, adolescents and individuals with special health care needs. For further information, please visit the AAPD website at <http://www.aapd.org> or the AAPD's consumer website at <http://www.mychildrensteeth.org>.