Eating right and the health of your mouth go hand in hand. That’s why many dentists are worried about the sugary snacks, sodas and juices their patients eat. These unhealthy choices can damage teeth and gums and your overall health.

How does the food we eat affect our teeth and gums?

If your diet isn’t rich in vitamins, it can affect your ability to fight infection. This may lead to tooth decay and gum disease. With a healthy diet, your body will get the right vitamins and minerals.

These nutrients will help keep your teeth and gums healthy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Found in</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>Milk, yogurt, beans and cheese</td>
<td>Helps to strengthen your teeth to fight tooth decay and to prevent gum disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>Red meat, liver and bran cereals</td>
<td>Lack of iron can cause tongue swelling and mouth sores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B3</td>
<td>Chicken and fish</td>
<td>Without enough B3, you can develop bad breath and mouth sores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamins B12 and B2</td>
<td>Meat and dairy products have B12. Pasta, bread and spinach have B2.</td>
<td>A lack of B12 and B2 can cause mouth sores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>Peppers, dark leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, oranges and strawberries</td>
<td>Helps prevent gingivitis, the first stage of gum disease</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limit foods that harm your teeth and gums.

Many of the foods we eat can cause damage to teeth and gums over time:

- **Carbohydrates**: Chips, crackers and pasta leave particles that allow germs such as bacteria to grow.
- **Sticky foods**: Chewy candy, raisins and syrup coat the teeth. This makes it hard for saliva to wash away the sugar.
- **Sugary foods**: Candy, cookies and cakes have lots of sugar. Sugar produces acid.
- **Soda and sweetened fruit juices**: These beverages are filled with sugar. Soda includes acid and carbonation that cause decay.

After you eat these foods, rinse your mouth with water. This will wash away the leftover food and sugar. Also, limit sugary snacks between meals. When you eat food that includes sugar, your teeth are attacked by acids for 20 minutes or more.

Children and adults should:

- Brush after eating or at least twice a day
- Use a fluoride toothpaste
- Floss daily
- Schedule regular dental checkups

Eat a balanced diet and take care of your mouth. 
You’ll have a beautiful smile to show the world.