

9 January 2014

UNESDA STATEMENT ON DENTAL HEALTH

Good dental hygiene is essential in maintaining optimum health of teeth and gums. Any food containing fermentable carbohydrates can contribute to tooth decay. This would include sweets and soft drinks but also pasta, rice, potato crisps, fruit, and even bread.

Under normal circumstances when we drink it passes quickly through the mouth and is then swallowed. The saliva in the mouth contains the minerals calcium, phosphorus and fluoride which enhance remineralisation and work to neutralise acids and reduce their effects on enamel.

A study by the UK Journal of Dentistry for Children linked a higher progression of erosion to frequent consumption of fruits and drinking habits such as swishing, sucking or holding beverages in the mouth.

Notes to Editors

We advise consumers to follow the European Food Information Council (EUFIC) advice on dental care. See website and below: <http://www.eufic.org/article/en/diet-related-diseases/dental-care/expid/review-food-dietary-habits-dental-health/>

- Start dental care early.
- Brush teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. If possible, clean between the teeth with dental floss or toothpicks once a day. Do not eat after cleaning teeth at bedtime as salivary flow decreases as we sleep.
- Visit the dentist about every 6 months for a check-up. And seek dentist's advice before using aesthetic products (e.g: teeth whiteners) that could have a deleterious effect on the teeth.
- Do not nibble food or sip drinks continuously. Allow time between eating occasions for saliva to neutralise acids and repair the teeth.
- People at high risk from tooth wear and erosion should take special precautions, such as:
 - decrease frequency and contact with acidic foods and drinks;
 - avoid brushing teeth immediately after consuming acidic foods, drinks, citrus fruits and juices. This allows time for remineralisation to occur.
- Fluoride mouthwashes and sugar-free chewing gum may be useful after taking acidic food or drinks as they encourage remineralisation
- Sugar-free chewing gum is “toothfriendly” as it helps increase saliva flow and clears food debris from the mouth.