

Sugars

Consuming sugary food and drink all day feeds bacteria in your mouth which leads to tooth decay.

Check your food labels

“no added sugar” –no extra sugars added to the ones found within the product, also may contain artificial sweeteners

“unsweetened” – no sugar or sweetener added

“low sugar”- 5g or less of added sugar in 100g of the product

“reduced sugar” – less sugar added than in the regular product

“added sugar” – if theres 15g or more per 100g, thats a lot, look out for 5g or less

Sugar comes in many forms

Most sugars in the diet are contained in processed and manufactured foods and drinks

- Sucrose
- Glucose
- Fructose
- Hydrolysed starch
- Maltose
- Glucose syrup
- Invert sugar
- Dextrose

Extrinsic Sugars

These are the sugars most responsible for tooth decay. They are found in soft drinks, cakes, biscuits, fruit juices, dried fruit and sugars added to foods and recipes

Intrinsic Sugars

These are naturally occurring sugars and are found in fruit and vegetables. They are not responsible for tooth decay

Dried fruits – fruit undergoes a drying process which converts the natural intrinsic sugars into extrinsic sugars. These now have the potential to cause tooth decay. Raisins, apricots, sultanas are examples.

How Sugar Causes Tooth Decay

Tooth decay occurs when sugar reacts with the bacteria found in the plaque on your teeth. This reaction forms the acids that attack and destroy the tooth's surface (enamel)

The frequency and amount of consumption of sugars in drinks and foods are the most important risk factors for causing tooth decay.

Acid Attacks

An intake of sugar causes the pH of the mouth to drop. When it reaches 5.5 (critical pH) an acid attack occurs.

During this acid attack the enamel begins to dissolve a process known as "demineralisation" this is the first stage in the development of caries.

It takes 20 minutes to an hour for the saliva to neutralise the acid "remineralisation" and if no more sugar is consumed the pH returns to normal.

Teeth can only withstand 4 acid attacks per day, when demineralisation is more frequent than remineralisation tooth decay occurs.



THE NUMBER OF SUGAR CUBES IN POPULAR DRINKS (each cube equals 4g)

- Lucozade (500ml) contains 15.5 cubes
- Coca Cola (500ml) contains 13.5 cubes
- Friij chocolate milkshake (471ml) contains 12.7 cubes
- Capri-Sun (330ml) contains 8.25 cubes
- Tropicana orange juice (300ml) contains 7.5 cubes
- Ribena (288ml) contains 7.25 cubes
- Volvic flavoured water (500ml) contains 5.75 cubes
- Tap water contains 0 cubes.

Food labels

Why food labels matter

You'll find traffic light labels on most food and drink, usually on the front of the pack. These labels use red, amber and green colour coding to help us understand what's inside our food so we can make healthier choices when shopping.

Food labels, also called nutrition labels, show how much sugar is inside what we're buying. Try to get in the habit of checking food labels, there are often hidden sugars in products.