

A collage of various snacks including macarons, cereal, donuts, chocolate, and marshmallows. The background is a light, textured surface. The word "Boredom" is written in a large, dark blue, cursive font. Below it, the text "can create a snack and sip day. Do this and risk decay!" is written in a smaller, dark blue, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is a pink circular graphic containing the text "TEETH are the only part of the body that can't heal themselves. Protect your children's teeth before it's too late." and the author's name "by Dr. Lisa Grant".

# Boredom

can create a snack and sip day. Do this and risk decay!

**TEETH** are the only part of the body that can't heal themselves. Protect your children's teeth before it's too late.

by Dr. Lisa Grant

Recently, we have come to know the trials and tribulations of being quarantined in our homes. No school, no shopping, no dining in at our favorite restaurant...

COVID-19 has affected us all, some in different ways, some the same. But the one thing we may not have thought of is the impact that sugary drinks and snacking all day while stuck at home may have on our children's oral health. Something as simple as breath mints, candy or sugary sports drinks all day while sitting at home can have a profound effect on your child's teeth and gums. Think about it - they are normally in school all day with only a lunch break. Now, however, they are at home doing online schooling, etc., and we many not be stopping to consider that it's so much easier to get up and grab a sugary snack or drink whenever they want. Not to mention, boredom tricks our minds into thinking we are hungry.

What and how often you snack and drink can have an effect on your teeth and increase your chances at tooth decay and cavities. Snacking mindlessly all day long is something to pay attention to, especially during this time, in order to avoid costly dentist appointments down the road. Plaque, that sticky film of bacteria that sits on your teeth all day long actually uses sugar to make acid that attacks enamel (the hard surface of our teeth). For up to approximately 20 to 30 minutes upon consuming a sugary snack or drink, that acid attacks your tooth enamel.

Now think about your children mindlessly having sugary snacks or drinks all day long while at-home schooling. Reaching for something every hour becomes easy, it becomes habit. They don't know any better until educated. Consider a child who sips on a sugary drink all day long. That acid will just simply attack the enamel over and over again all day. Repeated acid attacks cause tooth decay.

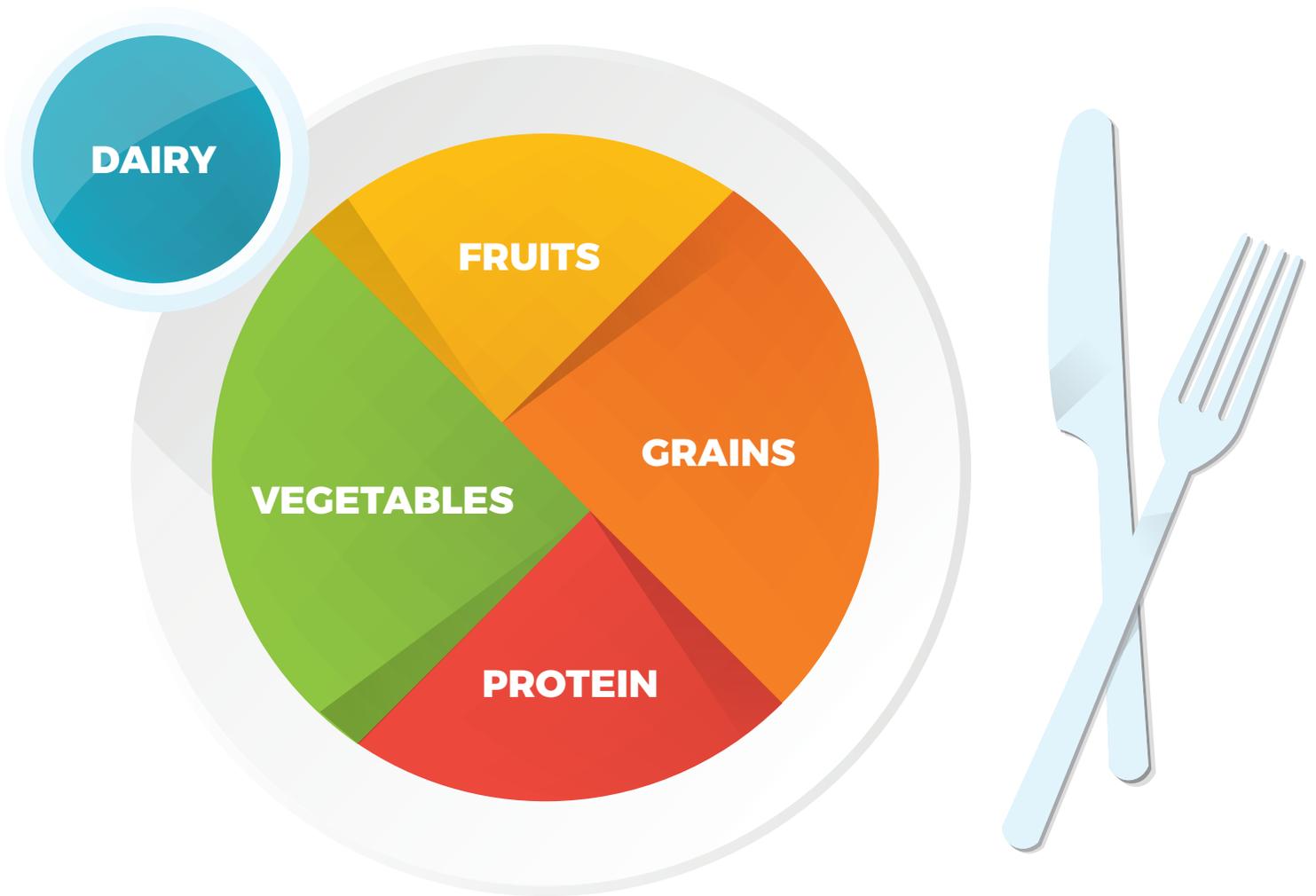


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So, what can you do? A good start is to limit sugary drinks by checking labels or keep a large glass of ice water by their side at all times. Beyond that, there are many ways to keep track and monitor your child, the most important being education! Let's take a look at some other ways to help keep your child in check when it comes to their oral health, not only in response to the pandemic, but for life.

**A healthy diet keeps your mouth healthy.**



Keep in mind that almost all foods we consume have some type of sugar. It would be impossible to eliminate it altogether, nor should we. Many foods contain natural sugar that we need in our bodies for vitamins, minerals and nutrients. They include:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Milk
- Plant-Based Foods
- Dairy Products

As opposed to natural sugar, we have to be careful of the added sugar that is generally what we find in foods to provide flavor. On the next page is a list of the most common sugars to be on the lookout for that are added to foods.





- Glucose
- Sucrose
- Fructose
- Lactose
- Dextrose
- Refined and Processed Sugars
- High Fructose Corn Syrup
- Brown Sugar
- Corn Sweetener
- Fruit Juice Concentrates
- Honey
- Invert Sugar
- Malt Sugar
- Molasses
- Syrup

Being mindful of these sources will go a long way to cutting added sugars from your children’s diet and help to keep their oral health in check.

Of course, there are other added benefits to watching sugar intake such as keeping them from feeling tired and having that mid-day “crash”, becoming overweight, getting ill, and other health problems.



A healthy diet is one that includes: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, proteins such as lean meats, poultry, beans, fish and nuts. A healthy diet should also be low in saturated fats, trans fats, salts and, of course, added sugars. For teeth to be healthy, they need protein, calcium, vitamins and phosphorus.

So, let's work on reducing your children's risk of tooth decay during this trying time (COVID-19) by:

- Limiting sugary snacks and sipping sugary drinks between meals and all day long. If they do snack, make sure they choose foods that are low in sugar – an apple, carrots, etc. And remember, sports drinks and juices have lots of sugar and will sit on their teeth all day long.
- If they do want to have some sort of juice or sports drink, let them have it while eating a meal. Their saliva increases while eating meals and helps to weaken acid and rinse lingering food particles from teeth.
- Allow them to chew sugarless gum that contains the ADA seal of approval. It has been shown that chewing sugarless gum for 20 minutes or so after a meal reduces tooth decay. And it will be a treat to them!

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- Let them drink as much water as they want, especially tap water which contains fluoride. The fluoride helps to prevent tooth decay and the water helps to rinse any sugar away.

- Make sure they see the dentist regularly. Of course, this is hard right now as in most states' dentists are only open for emergencies! Have faith and pray that this all ends soon, and then make an appointment for a good checkup.

And don't forget to have them brush at least two times a day!

## The truth is...

no one really knows at this point how long the pandemic safety measures will be in place.

However, we can use it as a great opportunity to protect our children's teeth and improve our health at the same time.



If we must practice social distancing, why not take advantage and use it positively? Besides, eating healthy is important for keeping the immune system in top shape.

Here are some helpful tips to use during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to help keep your children healthy and reduce their risk of tooth decay and cavities.



## Minimize trips to the supermarket and eat healthy.

When you either go on a shopping trip or utilize pick up or delivery of your groceries, visualize or write down what your family will be eating for at least five days to two weeks. Make sure you are only buying healthy foods with a small treat here and there. If at all possible, include your children in the process of choosing healthy foods. It helps them to understand and want to join in on this new journey with you.

Also, try to include them in meal prep and cooking if you can. Ask them to make a list of what is in the pantry and what you may need in order to cook a good healthy meal. Give them items to add to the list. Have them look through old cookbooks or on the internet to either find meals and snacks that are healthy or to find recipes to use up what you already have on hand. Ask them to share their ideas with you.



## Stock up on nutritional foods that will last a week or longer.

Keep in mind that the healthiest meals and snacks consist of vegetables, fruits and whole grains. These are what you want to serve the greatest amounts of. Be sure to create a shopping list and stick to it. That way you won't forget items and you won't impulse buy.

Below is a list to help you protect your children's oral and overall health and foods that have a shelf life:

- Spices and Flavorings – Greek yogurt, mustard, dried herbs and spices, vinegar, sauces, light dressings, lemon/lime juice
- Milk – Fresh milk, almond milk, oat milk, soy milk, canned, packaged
- Breads – Whole grain English muffins, low-carb wraps, corn tortillas, bagel thins, frozen whole wheat waffles
- Beef – pre-made meatballs or frozen lean ground patties
- Grains – wheat pasta or quick-cooking pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, couscous
- Chicken – frozen or canned
- Fruits – canned in water, dried, sturdy fresh fruit such as citrus and apples, frozen
- Sauces – tomato sauce and salsa (watch the sugar content on these)
- Seafood – frozen, canned
- Soups/Broths – frozen, canned, cartons with a long expiration date
- 100% Juice – (limit this) frozen, canned, boxed, refrigerated
- Eggs – fresh or egg whites in cartons
- Nuts/Seeds – canned, bagged, nut butters
- Cheese – sliced, shredded, grated, crumbles, cubed





## Try not to buy frozen dinners.

They are loaded with sodium, fat and calories. More importantly, do your best to limit purchasing those tempting foods such as cookies, soda, ice cream, chips, etc. That's where the sugar comes in that will sit on their teeth all day – not to mention how high they are in empty calories! And, as noted above, make eating healthy at home a positive experience. Get the kids involved, try some new recipes, reconnect.

*We're all in this together.*

Make the most of it and bring your children out wiser and stronger.

## Teach your children to think positive!

Their mindset is crucial to making their way through this pandemic both mentally and physically. Boredom eating is automatic to most children. If you practice positive stress management strategies with them, they are less likely to be bored, anxious, snacking and sipping all day long. Here are some things you can do to stop the “snack and sip”:

- Walk the dog, take a hike, call a friend, cuddle up with a movie, soak in the tub with some good music.
- Stick to their routine the best that you can. Wake up on the usual schedule and go to bed on the usual schedule. Eat meals at the times you normally would.
- Exercise. Yoga in the living room, scavenger hunt in the back yard, toss a ball, play tag, yardwork (make it fun!).
- Manage boredom. Keep them as busy as you can (or at least engaged). Stay in touch with family and friends by phone, start a scrapbook, enjoy a hobby, cook healthy foods, read, make a video with them.

Good nutrition means healthy teeth. Reduce unhealthy snacking and drinking sugary drinks all day long. Plan ahead. Eat breakfast. Stay hydrated with water. Cut back on processed foods and added sugar as much as possible. Eat real food – a balanced diet is key – a poor diet will lead to dental disease and bad oral health.

Making smart choices will lead to feeling great, looking great and keeping your children's teeth looking and feeling great!

