United **Concordia** dental℠

Oral Wellness Series

Eating Habits for Healthy Smiles

Good nutrition doesn't just benefit your body — it can keep your teeth and gums healthier, too! That's because the mouth is the first point of contact for everything you consume. Poor eating habits can lead to gum disease and tooth decay, while smart food choices can create healthier smiles.

Here are some tips on eating for good oral wellness:

1. **Choose nutritious foods** — The sugar in junk food mixes with bacteria in your mouth, which creates acid and can wear down tooth enamel. Eventually, this can lead to cavities. The next time you find yourself craving chips or cookies, reach for something nutritious instead. Fruit, veggies, yogurt and cheese contain calcium and other nutrients that help strengthen teeth and protect them from decay.

2. **Drink water, not soda** — Soft drinks and other sweet beverages coat the teeth with sugar, which can lead to cavities. Water helps to neutralize acid and rinse away food bits, protecting teeth from decay. It also hydrates the rest of your body.

3. **Eat sweets in moderation** — Hard candy can damage enamel and leave your teeth vulnerable to cracks and chips. Sticky pastries, other sweets, and even dried fruit can lodge in tooth crevices and loosen dental work. All contain sugar, which can lead to cavities. If you do indulge in sweets, do so right after a meal, when your mouth is producing extra saliva that breaks down harmful acids and rinses away sugar.

4. **Don't chew ice** — Chewing ice can cause fractures, cracks and chips, which can make teeth more sensitive and lead to further damage. It can also hurt existing dental work. If you have to chew, choose sugar-free gum instead.

5. **Limit alcohol consumption** — Excessive drinking can reduce saliva flow, which can lead to dehydration and dry mouth, leaving you vulnerable to tooth decay, gum disease and mouth cancer.