

Beverage choices affect oral health

These three types of popular beverages can impact oral health.

Bottled Water: The American Dental Association is concerned about the decreased consumption of tap water because deprivation of fluoridated water may have a lifelong impact on children's dental health. More than 500 brands of bottled water are sold in the United States, but only about 20 have added fluoride. Be sure to check the fluoride content of your bottled water. Ask your dentist how much fluoride you and your family need for good dental health.

Sports Drinks: These drinks can contribute to decay and mineral loss in tooth enamel because of the high sugar and acid content in some of them. Excessive consumption of these beverages and their prolonged contact with teeth can be particularly harmful. Some tips to help protect your teeth:

- Limit consumption of sports drinks
- Dilute sports drinks with water
- Chill your drinks (warmer temperatures speed erosion)
- Don't hold or swish drinks in your mouth; use a straw to reduce contact with teeth
- Rinse your mouth with water after drinking to minimize the strength of the drink's acidity
- Chew sugarless gum after a drink to stimulate saliva
- Ask your dentist to check for early signs of decay (white spots, stained fissures, and brown spots)

Soft Drinks: Like sports drinks, these drinks have a high sugar and acid content, and their consumption should be limited. Bacteria in the mouth feed on sugar and make an acid that dissolves tooth enamel and could eventually lead to cavities. Even sugar-free diet sodas are not entirely safe, because they are acidic by nature. The tips that protect your teeth from sports drinks also apply to soft drinks.

