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**February is National Children's Dental Health Month
Sipping, Snacking and Tooth Decay**

Eau Claire, WI, February 14, 2017 –Many parents tell their kids at dinner: —“You’d better eat that--it’s good for you!” or “Don’t eat that—it will rot your teeth!” Kids are faced with a many different food choices -- from fresh vegetables to frozen meals, sugary treats and snack foods. What children eat and when, may affect their general health as well as their oral health. Did you know that one in five 3rd graders in Eau Claire have untreated dental decay?



Americans are consuming foods and drinks high in sugar and starches more often and in larger amounts than ever before. When sugar is eaten over and over again the effect on teeth can be startling. The average teenage boy in the U.S. consumes 81 gallons of soft drinks each year! We know that a steady diet of sugary foods and drinks can ruin teeth, especially for people who snack throughout the day. Some common activities contribute to tooth decay such as, snacking on foods with little nutritional value, and frequently sipping on sugary drinks.

Almost all foods that we eat have sugar. But sugar becomes a problem for tooth decay when we have a diet high in sugars and starches. Starches can be found in everything from bread to pretzels to salad dressing, so it is important to read labels and plan for a balanced diet for you and your family.

Here are some ways to lower your children’s chance of tooth decay:

- If you are eating sugary foods and drink, remember to consume them during meals. Saliva increases during meals and helps decrease acid and rinse food particles in the mouth.
- Limit between-meal snacks. If kids crave a snack, offer them healthy foods.
- If your kids chew gum, make it sugarless – Chewing sugarless gum after eating can help wash out food and acid.
- Instead of soft drinks all day, children should also drink water and low-fat milk.
- Help your children develop good brushing and flossing habits.
- Schedule regular dental visits.

<http://www.ada.org/en/public-programs/national-childrens-dental-health-month>

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