

# Smiles Better!

with **Dr. Nuala Devlin**  
Causeway Dental  
Practice, Ballymoney



## Diet tips for back to school

It's hard to believe the summer is almost over and it's time to get uniforms and school bags ready for the next school term. Parents always debate over whether they should send kids for school meals or packed lunches and what to get for break times. Diet plays such an important role in the health of your child's dental health so here are a few helpful tips to help you decide what to send them off to school with and help them get back into a routine with brushing and eating after the school holidays.



- Give sugary foods less often, particularly those of a sticky or chewable nature. Remember that dried fruits can provide sugar and a sticky surface on teeth that encourage bacterial growth and acid production
- Choose raw vegetables, wholemeal bread, unsweetened yoghurt or cheese as snacks.
- Avoid sugary or acidic drinks, water or milk is a better option. If you want to give diluted drinks its best these are only given with meals. But when drinking between meals water is best.
- Try to get kids to drink through a straw. Liquids sucked through a straw have less contact with teeth and are less damaging than those consumed from a glass.
- If you do give sweets as a treat, it is better that they are eaten all at once. Avoid 'grazing' over extended periods. For example a whole chocolate bar eaten in one go is better than constantly dipping in to a bag of sweets.
- Giving milk or cheese in a meal especially if its eaten at the end of the meal is great to help neutralise the acid and so lower the risk of decay.
- Finishing a meal with a crunchy piece of fruit that removes sticky foods from the teeth e.g. a piece of carrot, apple, celery stick or even sugar free gum for 10 minutes for children old enough not to choke on it is another way to reduce decay.
- Don't brush your child's teeth immediately after eating acidic foods or drinks as they are weaker after eating and so brushing may actually harm the softened enamel. It is best to rinse with water or an alcohol free fluoride mouthwash.
- Do not let kids have anything except water after they've brushed their teeth at night – less saliva is produced at night and so the teeth are not as protected from acid attack.
- When brushing in the morning brush before breakfast, then after eating rinse with water or mouthwash.

For more information have a look at these helpful websites:

[www.dentalhealth.org](http://www.dentalhealth.org)  
[www.healthyteeth.org](http://www.healthyteeth.org)  
[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Careofkidsteeth](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Careofkidsteeth)

**Until Next Month**  
**Nuala**