

Tips for healthy snack foods.

When deciding what snack to eat, think about—

- » The type of snack (for example, raw vegetables would be a better snack than potato chips).
- » The number of times you eat sugary and starchy snacks (the more often you snack, the more likely you are to get tooth decay).
- » How long the snack stays in your mouth.
- » The texture of the snack. Starchy or sticky foods stay on the teeth longer.

Tips for healthy drinks:

- » Drink water or non-fat milk to rehydrate instead of sports drinks or energy drinks.
- » Drink sugar-sweetened or acidic drinks in one sitting.
- » If you drink sugary or acidic drinks, make sure they are cold and use a straw that reaches to the back of your tongue to keep the drink away from your teeth.
- » Rinse your mouth with plain water after drinking sugary or acidic drinks.

Weapons against decay:

- » Use fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- » Chew xylitol gum after meals and snacks.



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Scan for more information on oral health.



Approved for public release, distribution unlimited. TA-208-0713

Oral Health

Use force health protection measures to avoid jeopardizing your mission.



Soldiers who don't take care of their mouths could be putting themselves and their fellow Soldiers in the line of fire. During deployment, Soldiers with serious dental problems usually require medical evacuation. Every time Soldiers have to be transported, they expose themselves and their fellow Soldiers to attack.

Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

- » Don't rinse your mouth after brushing, just spit out the toothpaste.
- » Don't eat or drink for a least 30 minutes after brushing.

Your toothbrush should have—

- » A small head (1" by 1/2" or smaller) that can fit around your back teeth.
- » Soft or ultra-soft nylon bristles that won't hurt your gums.
- » A long, wide handle that fits your hand comfortably.

Floss once a day.

- » Wrap the end of the floss around your middle finger and use your index finger to guide the floss.
- » Pull gently from side to side to get the floss through the tight spots between your teeth but be careful not to saw your gums!
- » Gently move the floss up and down against the tooth in back, then against the tooth in front.
- » Use a fresh section of floss for each area.

Prevent tooth decay.

- » Only eat treats right before or right after meals.
- » Eat foods with plenty of calcium (such as skim and low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese or green, leafy vegetables). Calcium hardens the outer surface of teeth.
- » Limit between meal snacks that contain sugars and starches.
- » Drink water right after snacking.
- » Use fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day.
- » Don't use tobacco.

Choose tooth-friendly snack foods and drinks

- » Nuts, raw vegetables and plain yogurt.
- » Hard cheese, especially cheddar, neutralizes decay-causing acids. Cheese also contains calcium.
- » Black tea contains fluoride and may protect against gum disease and tooth decay.
- » Limit sugar-sweetened or acidic drinks (like soda, punch, juice, sports drinks and energy drinks). Sipping one drink over 8 hours is worse than drinking 3 with a meal, because the drink is in contact with the teeth for a longer time.
- » Sugar-free gum or candy.
- » Xylitol[®] gum or mints. Xylitol[®] is a natural sweetener. It blocks cavity-causing bacteria, blocks bacteria from making acid which causes tooth decay, decreases plaque formation, and helps harden weakened teeth. Chew a piece of Xylitol[®] gum after each meal for 3-5 minutes.