

## Healthy Teeth at School

Alberta Health Services has some advice for parents worried their children's teeth might be neglected now that they are heading back to the classroom, and some tips to help your children keep their teeth clean at school.

"Packing the right foods in your children's lunches is one way to keep cavities at bay," says Dr. Gerry Predy, Senior Medical Officer of Health for Alberta Health Services. "Foods such as store-bought cookies, potato chips, fruit roll-ups, and pop tend to be high in sugar and increase the risk of cavities."

Better lunch or snack alternatives are hard cheeses, milk, yogurt, fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grain products, boiled eggs, meats, or seeds. These foods contain the nutrients children need without the sticky sugars.

"Some of the sugar from these foods stays on children's teeth for the day and is a prime candidate for causing cavities," says Dr. Predy. "Even granola bars, which can be nutritious, may have a lot of sticky sugar in them, especially if marshmallows, flavored chips or chocolate coating have been added."

Parents should also avoid junk foods that masquerade as healthy snacks such as fruit snacks with fruit juice added. Fresh fruit is a better choice, and unsweetened fruit juices are much better than fruit-flavored drinks made with added sugar. Dr. Predy also recommends parents read labels to avoid products containing sucrose, honey, molasses, corn syrup, and natural sugars.

Flossing once a day, regular dental check-ups, brushing your teeth in the morning and before going to bed are all part of taking care of one's teeth. Dr. Predy recommends parents help their children brush their teeth with fluoride toothpaste and help floss until about age nine.

Residents with any other health-related concerns can call Health Link Alberta to speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, toll free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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