

Open Wide: Optimizing Oral Health Through Diet

Webinar Questions Answered by Ellen Karlin, MMSc, RDN, LDN, FADA and Sara Karlin, DDS

- Dr Karlin listed contributing factors to ECC, I would like that list, if possible? It included the mom cleaning pacifier by sucking on it if she has caries.

Putting baby to sleep with a bottle, frequent snacking throughout the day and putting juice in baby's bottle are a few of the contributing factors that I discussed.

- What medications in adults contribute to dental caries?

Any medication that leads to dry mouth and results in decreased salivary flow can eventually lead to caries. These include but are not limited to some antidepressants and antihistamines.

- I have recently seen some dietitians on social media sharing content from functional dentists who warn against using mouthwash/foamy toothpastes for the microbiome. These dentists also recommend avoiding fluoridated toothpastes and water due to neurotoxicity. Is there any new, well-designed evidence to support these types of claims?

We are starting to see research revolving around the effects of mouthwash on the oral microbiome. However, this research is evolving, stay tuned for more evidence-based research in this area. There are recent epidemiological studies that suggest that young children should not have "elevated" fluoride exposures. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Dental Association both recommend brushing with fluoride toothpaste to prevent caries.

- Any input regarding anti-septic mouthwash and it's protentional ability to inhibit the nitric oxide pathway?

Antiseptic mouthwash does alter the oral bacterial flora, but the research is inconclusive regarding its potential ability to inhibit the nitric oxide pathway.

- When you said 90% of adults have dental caries did you mean untreated caries or are you including all caries that have been treated/filled?

According to the 2021 NIH Oral Health in America Report, 9 out of 10 (working age) adults are affected by caries.

- Sugar is natural, from beet or cane. So how is this different from sugars contained in fruit?

Sugar that is naturally present in fruit does not count as an added sugar. When you eat fruit, you are consuming nutrients and fiber that benefit the oral microbiome. While beet sugar and

cane sugar are “natural”, they are added sugars and should be limited in the diet. The DGA recommend limiting added sugar to less than 10% of total calories.

- Can you discuss the impact (negative or positive) of breastfeeding past 1 year on oral health for children?

The AAPD recommends weaning by 12-14 months.

- Is there a relationship of poor oral health to Parkinson’s disease?

Some patients with Parkinson’s disease find it challenging to maintain optimum oral health. We recommend that these patients discuss their dental challenges with their dentist.

- Do you have any recommendations for how to get schools to stop giving candy as rewards?

We always recommend non-food rewards, such as stickers, erasers and pencils.

- Do you have information or resources on "chalky teeth"? My daughter has this, and neither her dentist or PCP have been able to speak to the cause.

This situation requires an evaluation by a dentist, because there can be so many factors involved.

- What about carbonated calorie free waters with no added artificial sweeteners added. Are those considered safe for teeth and oral health?

The American Dental Association tell us that “according to available research, sparkling water is generally fine for your teeth.”

- What is the effect of artificially sugars in gums and beverages on dental health?

What does the research show? Non-nutritive sweeteners do not contribute to caries.

- How is broth associated with increased caries risk?

Broth is not associated with increased caries risk.

- I have heard that chewable vitamins are a cause of cavities in the pediatric population. Is this true?

Chewable vitamins often contain sugar and can lead to caries. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the DGA recommend that children obtain their nutrients from consuming a healthy diet.

- Any suggestions for Sports drink alternatives while performing a sport?

You will find that there are so many new products on the market in the sports drinks category! We suggest that you read and compare the ingredients, in order to find the sports drink alternative that best suits your individualized needs.

- Do dates, such as those in bars (Larabars, etc.) count as added sugar and have a negative health effect on teeth?

Dried fruit in bars should be eaten with a meal instead of as a snack.

- Instead of drinking juice all day, could we recommend water mixed with a sugar-free crystal light packet?

“Spa water” or water with a slice of cucumber or mint would be a good alternative to drinking juice all day.

- If people don’t drink fluoridated water because they want to filter their water, is fluoride toothpaste enough?

The AAPD recommends both drinking fluoridated water along with using fluoride toothpaste.

- If the person is a vegan, what do you recommend for maintaining the pH of the mouth?

Healthy vegan dietary patterns, that include adequate amounts of water, macronutrients and micronutrients, while limiting added sugars, promote a healthy salivary pH.

- Does lemon water with no added sugar break down enamel?

We recommend drinking lemon water in moderation and with a meal, if possible.

- Did I hear correctly to floss twice daily?

We recommend brushing twice a day and flossing at least once a day.

- Is apple cider vinegar bad for tooth enamel?

Apple cider vinegar is acidic; enjoy it with your meal.

- How do you suggest we make sure patients are brushing effectively but not damaging their gums?

We recommend a soft toothbrush head.

- Are there any herbs that may be useful to support oral health?

Culinary herbs and spices contain phytochemicals, which appear to benefit oral health.

- What is the link between Thyroid disease and periodontal disease?

The current evidence-based research does not confirm that there is a link between hypothyroidism and periodontal disease.

- How do you get rid of calcium spots on teeth and what causes them?

The causes are multifactorial. You can discuss potential removal options with your dentist.

- If a person eats baked goods that contain sugar such as maple syrup, but contains whole grain flours and fruits or walnuts in them, how cariogenic are they?

The walnuts and whole grains in this baked good would not be cariogenic. This baked good would require lots of chewing which will promote salivary flow, rinsing the debris from your teeth. Enjoy with a glass of milk or water.

- Please share your thoughts on regular coffee intake and impact on teeth and oral health?

This depends upon what you put in your coffee. If you drink your coffee black or add milk to your coffee, enjoy. If you add cream and sugar to your coffee, it becomes a cariogenic beverage.