Dr. Samy's Smile Update

Shane Samy, D.M.D., P.C.

2233 Willamette, Bldg D
Eugene, Oregon 97405
Ph: (541) 686-2931
Fax: (541) 686-4500
e-mail: SamyDMD@aol.com
Website: http://www.SamyDMD.com

Up-to-date techniques and caring service with a practical approach

Oral Health & Nutrition

Nutrition refers to processes involved in ingestion and the use of nutrient and nonnutrient components of foods for growth, maintenance, and repair of the body. *Malnutrition* is a generic term for the pathophysiological consequences of the ingestion of inadequate, excessive or unbalanced amounts of nutrients (primary malnutrition) or the impaired use of ingested nutrients, often resulting from infections and disease (secondary malnutrition). Nutrition plays an intense role in our oral health, especially during childhood. There are different categories on "how" we study nutritional effects on health and this is where things develop into a mosaic of thoughts and theories (based on an individual researchers background). The study of nutrition is a complicated science, which is improving each year.

We've all heard the old adage "you are what you eat"! This is much truer than most physicians and researchers used to think. The general consensus for the effects of nutrition is based on "Diet → Metabolism → host immune system → inflammatory response(s)" theories and currently focused on mechanistic studies within the various health care disciplines.

The most prominent single threat to a person's oral health comes from excessive non-milk extrinsic sugars found in soda, juices, biscuits, cakes, candy, and table sugar. Adding sugar to milk related food, and allowing kids to sip sugary drinks is also becoming a concern. These sugars provide almost twice the amount of food energy than they should! But more importantly they "feed the bacteria" and lack the micronutrients needed to develop and maintain a healthy immune system (hence "host immune system suppression theory").

In our mouths, nutrition can play a duel role—topical and systemic. Clinical studies are starting to show that periodontal / gingival disease(s) have a strong relationship to our overall systemic health. And it has been well known and documented that the film left over from food (plaque) harbor bacteria, which in turn causes decay and periodontal disease.

So what should we eat / do for our teeth / oral health ?

Common sense plays a big part of this decision. First we should eat what we can tolerate. All people cannot tolerate all foods. Avoid things that may give you allergies and / or discomfort. Milk allergy with babies can carry through to adults and effect our Ca requirements, this is very important to address as early as possible. Food allergies cause certain lesions in our mouths, mentioning the problem can help us tell the difference between an allergy and potentially something more serious. Unfortunately this is trial and error until you can determine which foods you should avoid.

Most dietitians are going away from the traditional "food pyramid" (avoiding categorization) recommending more balanced diets for all meals and increasing the vegetable and fruit intake recommendations. You may consider a multivitamin and increasing calcium enriched foods or taking calcium supplements. Various studies have shown that if taken with meals and / or with something acidic (i.e. orange juice) an increase in the utilization and absorption of these minerals occurs. Calcium is the single most important mineral needed for optimum repair and maintenance of our bodies. Caffeine, chocolate and fat effect the absorption of calcium, therefore skim milk is preferred over chocolate milk.

The frequency of eating high sugar content foods (candy & soda pop) has a high correlation to decay and periodontal disease. The most critical time for children is the teenage years. Often good eating and brushing habits are lost during this time. The addition of vending machines loaded with sugar drinks and candy is a grave concern to the dental community. We will soon see a significant increase in dental disease within the teenage population. It is very important to try and limit the frequency and duration of sugar consumption. There is a direct link of the number of disease causing bacteria in the mouth to the frequency of eating candy and soda pop.

Most kids will not brush their teeth at school!

We all like to snack, especially during the holidays. So if you must, and you're in a social setting which makes it more difficult to brush immediately after, then simply drinking water and / or rinsing with water will help reduce the "acid concentration" in the mouth. Teaching kids to rinse their mouths with water after meals, snacks, developing a family plan to eat healthy snacks, and following a rigorous home oral care program will go a long way toward a lifetime of healthy teeth and happy smiles!

As always, consult your physician or dietitian prior to making any major changes in your diet.

Dr. Samy's Perspectives

- Bone is the major storage organ for calcium and because it's also the foundation for our teeth, under dosing our recommended calcium intake can cause rapid and severe bone loss in the mouth; one of the first places we see bone changes (for women 1200-1500 mg / day, men: 1000-1500 mg/day)
- Available calcium in the blood stream is a % of actual calcium we ingest (usually 1/3), so if you take 1200 mg of calcium per day there is only about 400 mg which pass' through to our blood stream (which is the average calcium blood level needed; depending on a persons body size)
- Most people don't need vitamins and supplements every day, in most situations every other day (at least 3-4 times / week) may be sufficient

Determine Your Nutritional Health

The warning signs of poor nutritional health are often overlooked. Use this checklist to find out if you or somenone you know is at nutrional risk.

Read the statement below. Circle the number in the yes column for those that apply to you or someone you know. For each yes answer, score the number in the box. Total your nutritional score.

	YES
I have an illness or condition that made me change the kind and/or amount of food I eat.	2
I eat fewer than 2 meals per day.	3
I eat few fruits or vegetables, or milk products.	2
I have 3 or more drinks of beer, liquor or wine almost every day.	2
I have tooth or mouth problems that make it hard for me to eat.	2
I don't always have enough money to buy the food I need.	4
I eat alone most of the time.	1
I take 3 or more different prescribed or over-the-counter drugs a day.	1
Without wanting to, I have lost or gained 10 pounds in the last 6 months.	2
I am not always physically able to shop for, cook for and/or feed myself.	2
Total your nutritional score	

0-2	**Good! Recheck your nutritional score in 6 months.**
3-5	**You are at moderate nutritional risk.** See what can be done to improve your eating habits and lifestyle. Your office on aging, senior nutrion program, senior citizens center or health department can help. Re-check your nutritional score in 3 months.
6 or more	**You are at high nutritional risk.** Bring this checklist the next time you see your doctor, dietitian or other qualified health or social service professional. Talk with them about any problems you may have. Ask for help to improve your nutritional health.

About Us

- We're getting ready, as many of you are, for our annual two-week break! As always, we've made arrangements to have other doctors help cover any Dental urgencies you may have.
- Did you know you can access previous newsletters from our web-site, please let us know if you have problems (as the site is continuously being upgraded)

Seasons Greetings

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