

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Limit sugar for a sweet smile

April is Oral Health Month in Canada. Regular brushing and flossing are good habits to help reduce tooth decay. However, limiting added sugar is also an important way you can prevent tooth decay and protect overall health.

Choosing too many foods and drinks with added sugar can increase your risk for tooth decay. Acid is produced when the bacteria in your mouth eat sugar. The acid dissolves the tooth surface (enamel) and can lead to tooth decay. Added sugar also adds calories without any nutrients, and can contribute to other diseases such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Added sugars are found in processed foods and drinks and can also be used to preserve foods such as jams and jellies. They can be added for taste, texture and colouring. Sugary drinks are the main source of added sugars in most people's diets. Examples include pop, fruit-flavored drinks, flavoured milks, sport drinks, and specialty coffees. Other foods high in added sugar are sweetened baked goods and desserts, chocolate and candy, and condiments like ketchup and jam.

The good news is that when we eat and drink less sugar, we lower the risk of tooth decay. Here are some tips to limit added sugar for healthy teeth and overall health:

At the grocery store:

- Read the ingredient list. Words ending in "ose" such as sucrose and fructose, or words such as syrups, honey, molasses, fruit juice and puree concentrate are sugars. When

they appear at the beginning of the list, the food is higher in sugar. Choose these foods less often.

When cooking and baking:

- Choose recipes with little or small amounts of added sugar.
- Try cutting down on the sugar, syrup, molasses and honey in your recipes. For example, instead of 1 cup (250 mL) use 1/2 or 3/4 cup (125 or 175 mL).
- Flavour foods with spices, herbs, lemon or vinegars, such as balsamic and cider, instead of bottled, premade sauces.
- Ready-made sauces such as sweet and sour, honey garlic, and ketchup contain sugar. Use them less often and in smaller amounts.

At home and when eating away from home:

- Drink water to quench your thirst.
- Limit the amount of sugar you add to foods and drinks during preparation or at the table.
- Limit the number of sugary drinks you have, such as pop, fruit-flavoured drinks, flavoured milks, sport drinks and specialty coffees.
- When choosing a snack, pick vegetables or fruit that do not contain added sugar.

April is Oral Health Month. Limit sugar for a sweet smile!

Learn more at [ahs.ca](https://www.ahs.ca) and search “all about sugar.”