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AGD:FACTSHEET

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TEEN'S ORAL HEALTH

Should I limit drinking soda?

YES! Whether at school, home or on the weekends, teens are drinking more soda than they have in the past. In 1977, 12 to 19-year-olds drank 16 ounces of soda a day. In 1996, this same age group consumed an average of 28 ounces a day. Not only is sugar harmful to teeth, acidic flavor additives can also erode and damage tooth enamel. There are simple ways you can limit the harmful effects of sodas. Try sipping soda through a straw. It cuts down on the contact the beverage has with your teeth. Rinse your mouth with water after drinking soda. It can also reduce the risk of cavities.

Why should I make time for healthy habits?

Quick meals in the form of "nutrition" bars and fast food help keep you alert and on schedule between school, extracurricular activities and part-time jobs. However, today's fast-paced lifestyle threatens to leave the teen generation with permanent damage to oral and overall health. You can keep travel-size brushes in lockers or back packs. Chewing sugarless gum with xylitol after meals or snacks can also help cleanse your mouth.

Drinking water throughout the day can help clean your teeth of excess bacteria and food debris.



FACT >>>

A typical 12-ounce can of regular soda contains approximately 10 teaspoons of sugar.

FACT >>>

The average male in the 12- to 19-year age group drinks the equivalent of 868 cans a year.



Why should I avoid oral piercings?

Tongue piercing remains a teen trend, however it is not always a healthy choice for your mouth. People chip teeth on tongue piercings while eating, sleeping, talking and chewing on the jewelry. Tongue piercing commonly causes fractured teeth. The fracture can be confined to tooth enamel and require a filling, or it may go deeper; in which case, can cause a need for a root canal or extraction.

Infections are also common with oral piercings, and they cause more than pain. A tongue can swell after being punctured, however in some cases the tongue becomes infected and swells so much that it may cut off breathing. Unclean piercing equipment can cause other infections, such as bloodborne hepatitis.



Teens should be sure to see their dentist at least twice a year. Regular dental visits can help catch minor problems before they become major ones!