Today We Learned How to Eat Smart to Keep Our Teeth Healthy

Today your child learned that foods and drinks that help keep their body healthy are good for their teeth, too.

Your child learned about foods and drinks that don’t have a lot of sugar. They also learned about foods and drinks that are high in sugar, such as cookies, candy, cake, ice cream, soda pop, lemonade, and fruit drinks.

Every time your child eats or drinks something with sugar (even if it’s a little bit of sugar), germs that stick to teeth make acids. Once acid is made, it stays on their teeth for 20–40 minutes. If your child eats or drinks something high in sugar all day, then they will have acid on their teeth all day. That gives the acid a long time to destroy tooth surfaces and make a hole (a cavity).

Every once in a while it’s OK to give your child foods or drinks that are high in sugar. If so, serve them at mealtime instead of as a snack.
A lot of drinks are high in sugar. Some drinks that are high in sugar are:

- Sport drinks like Gatorade, Powerade, Propel, and Vitamin Water
- Soda pop like Coke, 7UP, Mountain Dew, and Pepsi
- Fruit juices like apple juice, grape juice, and orange juice

Pediatricians and other health professionals recommend that children drink no more than 4 ounces of juice a day. They also suggest that children eat raw fruit instead of canned fruit packed in syrup or fruit juices.

You can find out how much sugar is in packaged food you serve your child. Check the Nutrition Facts label. Sugar amounts are shown in grams.

To figure out how many teaspoons of sugar there are in foods and drinks, divide the grams by 4. Four grams equal 1 teaspoon.