

What parents can do to promote good dental health

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Eat right and teach kids how to care for their teeth properly, expert suggests.

(HealthDay)—Parents can take several steps to make sure their kids maintain healthy dental habits when they head back to school, an expert says.

Eat healthy foods at home, such as fruits, vegetables, whole [grains](#), dairy products and protein. Most natural foods have lower amounts of sugar than processed foods and do less damage to teeth, according to Kathleen Pace, an assistant professor in the Baylor College of Dentistry at Texas A&M University in Dallas.

"Parents need to serve these foods at home so their children will imitate those eating habits when they are elsewhere," she said in a university news release.

She also suggests that parents:

Be sure to include fruits and dairy in youngsters' school lunches. Fruit will satisfy their craving for sweets and provide healthy nutrients, while [dairy products](#) such as milk and cheese with help strengthen their bones and teeth.

Do not give children sticky and sugary foods. "In general, any food that is sticky, crunchy or has sugar can promote cavities," Pace said. "Unfortunately, sugar is in almost everything."

Take part in children's morning and nightly teeth cleaning rituals, and teach them how to take care of their teeth. "Children love to imitate, so let them watch you brush your teeth and floss. Or even better, do it with them," Pace said. "Really try to have your kids brush their [teeth](#) after breakfast."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [child dental health](#).

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