

## ***Soft Drinks and Tooth Decay***

With the rising temperatures, it is so important for us to stay hydrated! This is especially important to all of our athletes, young and older. Many people turn to drink choices like Gatorade or flavored waters to quench their thirst. Unfortunately, there is a down side to these choices. There has been a steady rise in the amount of sugary drinks consumed every day by children and adults. It's not unusual for a person to drink 6 to 7 cans of soda a day. The average American gets more than 23 pounds of sugar from soft drinks yearly! And it gets better...contrary to popular belief, diet or "sugar-free" drinks can be just as harmful to your teeth because of their high acid level!

When we drink soft drinks or other sugary beverages, we are exposing our teeth to something over periods of time that will break down the hard enamel that protects our teeth. Even good brushing and flossing habits will not prevent the breakdown of enamel! Decay is caused from the tiny bacteria thriving around our teeth, that, when exposed to sugar, produce acid. The acid causes enamel and any exposed root surfaces to soften and decay.

The effects of tooth decay do not paint a pretty picture. The hard outer coating of the teeth gets eaten away, leaving tooth surfaces looking darkly stained, soft and leathery. Some teeth even develop tiny holes at the gum line. When left untreated, tooth decay can lead to larger cavities, root canals, crowns, and possible tooth loss! On top of this, excess sugar in our diets can lead to obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, kidney stones, and poor overall health!

Fortunately, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We can limit the amount of soda and other sugary drinks – especially when wearing braces or retainers. Read labels for ingredients such as **high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, glucose, or dextrose**. These are other names for **SUGAR**. Choose to drink plain old water – it really is the best choice for our health. Ask Dr. Rinehart about prescription fluoride products such as toothpastes and rinses to help strengthen tooth enamel. The key to all of this is MODERATION. Drink liquids low in sugar and acid and maintain good oral health by brushing and flossing. Don't forget to stay on schedule with your regular hygiene visits. We love to see you!!

We wanted to include 2 lists of beverages to limit your intake of during the heat of summer. The first list includes beverages with a **high acid content**. These include Pepsi, Coke, Orange Minute Maid Soda, Hawaiian Punch, and Squirt. The second list includes beverages with high **sugar content**. These include Orange Slice, Grape and Orange Minute Maid Soda, Mountain Dew, and Barq's Root Beer.

Stay cool, wear your sun block, and drink your water!

*Dr. Rinehart and Staff*