

Dear Lovely Person Helping Take Care of Children:

First: Thank you! Whether you are a grandma, grandpa, uncle, aunt, daycare provider, preschool teacher, nanny, or any other one in the circumstance of looking after children; thank you for what you do. Taking care of kids is one of the most important jobs out there, and your hard work is appreciated. (It is hard work, even if it is fulfilling.)

As a dentist who has to care for children's teeth, I see kids with a lot of pain and sensitivity from cavities, and you may think baby teeth are important, or you may not, but please hear me out.

Those back baby teeth aren't lost until ages 10-12, so getting holes in teeth at ages 3 or 4 is no fun. We can't just pull the teeth because kids would have nothing to chew on for 7 years.

The good news is there are a few easy, but extremely important things, that can be done to prevent cavities.

The number one thing is to keep snack times organized. Make sure to set up snack or meal times every 2 or 3 hours, and **only allow water** to be carried around in between meals. Even healthy foods, like milk or fruit can cause cavities if they are eaten every 20 minutes. As soon as snack time is done, clean everything up, and only allow water to be carried around. If you are allowing a child to carry around juice or soda, **please stop this habit immediately**. There is no need for soda or juice in the house, preschools, or daycare settings.

Here is something I didn't know until recently: cavities can also be caused by flour. However, the solution to prevent really bad cavities is easier than you think. Fresh fruit is better than dried fruit for teeth. Fresh bread is better than dried bread (crackers) for teeth. It is the same nutrition, but crackers and dried fruit just happen to be very sticky. Letting a child eat crackers or dried fruit all day long can be very bad for teeth, even if they don't have any added sugar. Believe it or not, keeping crackers to one time a day or less is actually much better for teeth because of the stickiness factor.

There is some good news! If you are going to give a treat, ice cream is a good choice because the sugars rinse away quickly. In fact, when it comes to teeth, having ice cream once a day is better than crackers three times a day, because all that matters is how long starches touch the teeth. It is counterintuitive. Also, ice cream is 10 times better than many other candies where the sugar stays in the mouth for long periods of time.

Thanks and keep up the good work!

Sincerely, Dr. Roger Lucas, DDS

P.S. I have attached a snack guide on the better snacks to use way to prevent “surprise” cavities.

If you can keep crackers to once a day or less, that is great!

TheDentistDad.com

# Zero Cavity Snack Guide

## Won't Cause Cavities



### (Low Carb foods)

Raw, Crunchy Vegetables  
 Raw, Leafy Vegetables  
 Cheese  
 Nuts  
 100% Nut butters  
 All Meats  
 All Fats  
 Water

*If you are thirsty, drink water!*

Remember to give your child age appropriate food. Nuts, hot dogs, grapes, and sausages are common choking hazards, especially in children three years old and under.

## (Usually) Won't Cause Cavities



Whole Milk  
 Fresh Fruit  
 Whole grain bread  
 Popcorn  
 Smoothies  
 Dark Chocolate (>70% Cacao)  
 Yogurt  
 Ice Cream  
 Dips & Sauces  
 Oatmeal

*Crunchy is best*

*Don't get carried away but it rinses better than other desserts.*

This list, including milk and fruit, has the potential to cause cavities quickly if you don't organize meal and snack times. The sugars won't stay in contact with teeth for long with organized eating habits.

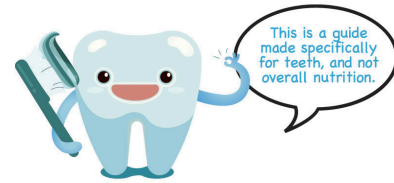
## Causes Cavities Easily



Candies  
 Soda  
 Juice  
 Chocolate milk  
 Cookies  
 Dried fruit  
 Fruit snacks/strips  
 Dried flour cereals  
 Pretzels  
 Crackers  
 Oranges & Bananas  
 Sports Drinks

*Please still eat them, just not all day long*

Even some healthy foods can cause cavities quickly. Being processed and/or dried is not good for teeth. Fresh bread is better than dried flour for teeth.



## Important Prevention Tips

- Always try to have a sip of water after every meal or snack!
- Give your child 5 to 6 organized "mini-meals" a day with only water in between.
- Disorganized eating or drinking will cause cavities even with healthy foods!
- Help your child brush their teeth daily until they are six or seven years old.
- Only have water after the night time brushing.
- Floss teeth if they are touching for additional protection.
- Schedule an infant screening exam with your dentist at age one.
- Fluoride application at your dentist every six months can also help reduce cavities by 20 to 30%.
- Never leave a bottle in bed with baby!

© Dr. Roger Lucas, DDS, Biochemist and Pediatric Dentist. Visit TheDentistDad.com for more great tips!