



Talking to your patients about the oral care benefits of chewing sugar-free gum

Dental Therapist and Hygienist Carolyn Renton explains the oral care benefits of chewing sugar-free gum.

As dental care professionals we understand that, immediately after eating or drinking, plaque acids attack teeth and initiate the demineralisation of the tooth surface, which can weaken enamel and lead to dental decay. But your patients may be unaware of this. Here are some conversation pointers about plaque acid attacks, the risk factors and what patients can do to help protect their teeth:

The Science

The drop in pH after eating or drinking usually takes no more than 5 minutes, whereas the recovery can take between 20 and 60 minutes, depending on the acid neutralising properties of an individual's own saliva.

Talking to your patients

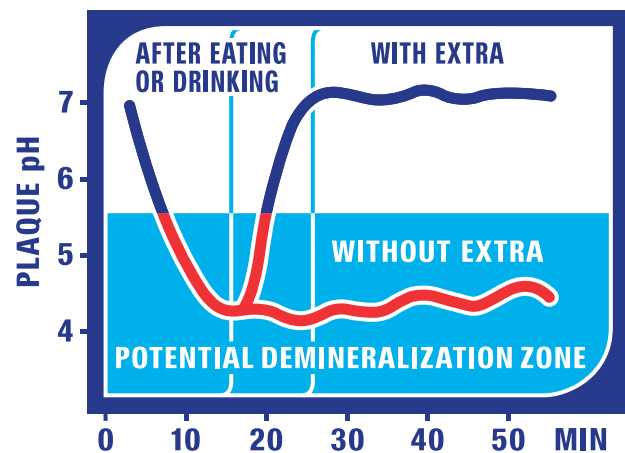
The Stephan Curve is a simple visual way of showing patients how the oral environment changes after consuming fermentable carbohydrate, highlighting the vulnerability of the tooth structure once the pH is below the critical level.

Our Natural Defences

Saliva plays a crucial role in decreasing the incidence of dental caries, as it has a high bicarbonate concentration that enhances the capacity to neutralise acid. It is also supersaturated with minerals that consist of the same components within tooth structure, which naturally encourage remineralisation.

Talking to your patients

Talking about the importance of saliva can be a simple explanation of how unique the



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human body is in its ability to restore calm caused during an acid attack, AND how by stimulating saliva through chewing sugar-free gum they can increase its ability to restore the oral environment to a safe level.

The stimulation of Saliva

It is well documented that the action of chewing stimulates the salivary glands to increase the flow rate by up to 10 times the resting state during the first few minutes of chewing, and keeps it significantly elevated throughout prolonged chewing.

Talking to your patients

When your patients are eating and drinking 'on the go,' chewing sugar-free gum offers a convenient and effective additional step in their daily oral care routine of brushing and interdental cleaning, to help keep their teeth clean and healthy throughout the day.

The 20 minute message

Advise your patients to chew sugar-free gum for 20 minutes after eating or drinking throughout the day to help reduce the formation of plaque acid that makes teeth susceptible to dental decay.

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