



For healthy teeth

"Tooth decay is the most common reason for hospital admission for children aged five to nine years," explains registered nutritionist **Sophie Thurner** (www.sophiethurnernutrition.com). "Too much sugar, especially sugary drinks, is the major cause for dental caries in children. Fizzy drinks can contain large amounts of sugar, which will increase the risk of tooth decay. Not only are they packed with sugar, both the sugary and the sugar-free versions are acidic, which makes teeth weak and vulnerable to attack from bacteria, leading to cavities. Even unsweetened juices and smoothies contain sugars and acids, so although they can contribute towards their five-a-day, it is recommended that children only have one small glass (about 150ml) of fruit juice or smoothie each day. If you do give fruit squash or sugary drinks to your child, make sure to dilute them well (minimum five parts water to one part squash). Ideally have your child drink water thereafter. Rinsing the mouth by drinking water helps wash away the residual sugar on the teeth, making the enamel less vulnerable for attack."

For bone strength

"Children go through major skeletal changes," explains Sophie. "Not only do they undergo growth spurts, bones also become denser during childhood. The level of bone density accumulated in childhood is crucial and affects bone health and the risk of osteoporosis in later life. Therefore, it is very important for children to have an adequate intake of the two most important nutrients for bone health: calcium and vitamin D. The best source of calcium in food is dairy. Good examples of dairy include home-made yogurt-based smoothies or milkshakes with fresh berries or banana made with full fat or semi-skimmed milk. Fully skimmed milk is not suitable as a main drink until a child is five years old because it does not contain enough calories or vitamins. Plant-based sources of calcium include fortified soy milk, bread and cereals, as well as dark green leafy vegetables, pulses and some dried fruits, seeds and nuts. Beware not to give children too much fibre in one sitting, as their small stomachs cannot cope with too much and it can also reduce the amount of calcium absorbed."

All children should receive daily supplements with 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Up to five years this should be done all year round. From then on between the months of October to March should be enough if they spend time outdoors in the summer months."

TRY THIS!

"One of the best things you can do to support your child's immunity is to give them a daily probiotic," says **Raihana Palagi**, BioCare's Clinical Nutrition Advisor (www.biocare.co.uk). "The bacteria *lactobacillus acidophilus*, *bifidobacterium bifidum* and *lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG have been shown to prevent and help fight respiratory tract infections in children."

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