



## MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO

Have you ever noticed when a bowl of candy is sitting on your desk or on the counter, you eat a piece or two as you pass by throughout the day? Or noticed yourself ordering a “combo meal” for lunch that includes a beverage that is much too large to finish during the meal, so you take it with you and continue drinking it all afternoon? These behaviors are known as *grazing* and *sipping* within the dental community.

Most parents would say, “Of course we would never allow our children to nibble on candy or sip on sodas all day long!” Did you know that allowing a child to sip fruit juice or sweetened liquids in sippy cups or nibble on dry cereal or crackers throughout the day is probably just as bad for their oral health?

The oral bacteria responsible for dental caries -- tooth decay -- will use any available fermentable carbohydrate – sugar -- to produce the acid by-product that destroys the enamel layer of teeth. The frequency of the carbohydrate exposure -- *grazing* and *sipping* -- and the absence of proper home and professional care can devastate a beautiful smile.

Encourage scheduled meal and snack times throughout the day. Offer a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as snack choices. Fruit juice should be limited to four ounces a day, served at mealtimes only. All other servings should come from whole fruits, which are “teeth healthy” choices. Water should be the only liquid consumed in between meals and snacks.

Why not modify our own *grazing* and *sipping* habits to include these healthy changes so the whole family might benefit from improved oral health? Children are great imitators: ***Monkey see, Monkey do!***

