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New Research Shows Cheese May Prevent Cavities

CHICAGO (June 5, 2013)—Consuming dairy products is vital to maintaining good overall health, and it’s especially important to bone health. But there has been little research about how dairy products affect oral health in particular. However, according to a new study published in the May/June 2013 issue of *General Dentistry*, the peer-reviewed clinical journal of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), consuming cheese and other dairy products may help protect teeth against cavities.

The study sampled 68 subjects ranging in age from 12 to 15, and the authors looked at the dental plaque pH in the subjects’ mouths before and after they consumed cheese, milk, or sugar-free yogurt. A pH level lower than 5.5 puts a person at risk for tooth erosion, which is a process that wears away the enamel (or protective outside layer) of teeth. “The higher the pH level is above 5.5, the lower the chance of developing cavities,” explains Vipul Yadav, MDS, lead author of the study.

The subjects were assigned into groups randomly. Researchers instructed the first group to eat cheddar cheese, the second group to drink milk, and the third group to eat sugar-free yogurt. Each group consumed their product for three minutes and then swished with water. Researchers measured the pH level of each subject’s mouth at 10, 20, and 30 minutes after consumption.

The groups who consumed milk and sugar-free yogurt experienced no changes in the pH levels in their mouths. Subjects who ate cheese, however, showed a rapid increase in pH levels at each time interval, suggesting that cheese has anti-cavity properties.

The study indicated that the rising pH levels from eating cheese may have occurred due to increased saliva production (the mouth’s natural way to maintain a baseline acidity level), which could be caused by the action of chewing. Additionally, various compounds found in cheese may adhere to tooth enamel and help further protect teeth from acid.

“It looks like dairy does the mouth good,” says AGD spokesperson Seung-Hee Rhee, DDS, FAGD. “Not only are dairy products a healthy alternative to carb- or sugar-filled snacks, they also may be considered as a preventive measure against cavities.”

To learn more about oral health, visit KnowYourTeeth.com.

About KnowYourTeeth.com

KnowYourTeeth.com is the Academy of General Dentistry’s (AGD) source of consumer information on dental care and oral health. Its goal is to provide reliable information in a format that is easy to use and navigate, and to provide the tools that will help consumers of all ages to care for their teeth and with other aspects of oral care. KnowYourTeeth.com answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current dental treatments and tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and can help visitors find qualified dentists near where they live or work.

About the Academy of General Dentistry

The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) is a professional association of more than 38,000 general dentists dedicated to providing quality dental care and oral health education to the public. AGD members stay up-to-date in their profession through a commitment to continuing education. Founded in 1952, the AGD is the second largest dental association in the United States, and it is the only association that exclusively represents the needs and interests of general dentists. A general dentist is the primary care provider for patients of all ages and is responsible for the diagnosis, treatment, management, and overall coordination of services related to patients' oral health needs. For more information about the AGD, visit agd.org. The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 35 leading dental health organizations. The Partnership's campaign is designed to educate parents and caregivers on how to improve their children's oral health in simple ways. The campaign offers families oral health resources through the website 2min2x.org.

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