From the office of:
Garrett K. Taoka, DDS
Harborside Dental
319 Whittier Hwy * Suite 3
Center Harbor, NH 03226
(603) 253-8700

Nutrition

AGD:FACTSHEET **FOR THE PATIENT**
Compiled for you by the Academy of General Dentistry

NUTRITION

Why are minerals and nutrients important for oral health?

You must include minerals and nutrients in your diet in order for the body's tissues to resist infection. The presence of too much or too little of any nutrient can have harmful effects, particularly on the mouth and teeth, and may contribute to oral diseases and infection.

Which vitamins and minerals are good for me?

There are many minerals and nutrients that are good for the entire body. Here are just some of the minerals and nutrients your body needs to stay healthy:

- Calcium. Your teeth and jaws are made mostly of calcium. Without enough calcium in your diet, you risk developing gum disease and tooth decay. Calcium is found in many foods and liquids, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, beans, and oysters.
- Iron. Iron deficiency can cause your tongue to become inflamed, and sores can form inside your mouth. Iron is found in many foods, including liver and red meat. Other iron-rich foods include bran cereals, some nuts, and spices.
- Vitamin B3 (niacin). A lack of vitamin B3 can cause bad breath and canker sores in the mouth. To boost your B3 levels, eat chicken and fish.
- Vitamins B12 and B2 (riboflavin). You also can develop mouth sores when you do not consume enough of the vitamins B12 and B2. Red meat, chicken, liver, pork, fish, as well as dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheese, are good sources of vitamin B12. Vitamin B2 is found in foods like pasta, bagels, spinach, and almonds.
- Vitamin C. Too little vitamin C will lead to bleeding gums and loose teeth. Sweet potatoes, raw red peppers, and oranges are great sources of vitamin C.
- Vitamin D. It is very important to consume enough vitamin D because it helps your body absorb calcium. A diet lacking or low in vitamin D will cause burning mouth syndrome. Symptoms of this condition include a burning mouth sensation, a metallic or bitter taste in the mouth, and dry mouth. Drink milk, and eat egg yolks and fish to increase your vitamin D intake.

Which foods may be bad for my mouth and why?

Not all foods are good for your teeth. If you consume these foods, do so in moderation, and be sure to practice good oral health care.

- **Carbohydrates.** Bacteria feed on left-over foods in the mouth and produce acid, which causes decay. Carbohydrate-laden foods, such as chips, bread, pasta, or crackers, can be as harmful to the teeth as candy.
- **Sticky, chewy foods.** Raisins, granola bars, jelly beans, caramel, honey, and syrup stick to teeth and make it difficult for saliva to wash the sugar away.
- **Sugary snacks.** Snacks like cookies, cakes, or other desserts contain a high amount of sugar, which can cause tooth decay.
- **Gum and candy.** Chewing gum and eating candy is very harmful to your teeth. As you eat, sugar coats your teeth, which can lead to cavities.
- **Carbonated soft drinks.** Regular soda (or pop) contains an extremely high amount of sugar. Both regular and diet sodas also contain phosphorous and carbonation, which wears away the enamel on your teeth (causing them to become stained and brown).
- **Fruit or vegetable juices.** Fruit and vegetable juices tend to be high in sugar, which can damage tooth enamel and lead to decay.

To ensure that you're getting the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals your body needs, check out the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web site at *www.mypyramid.gov.*