

Does raisins protect against cavities?

Good health and access to health services are fundamental human rights. These rights are equally valid for oral health and oral health care, since oral health is an integral part of general health. Unfortunately these privileges have not been fully realized as untreated dental caries remains global public health problem especially among the children and adolescence. Analysis of caries epidemiological data access from WHO oral health in 2006 reveals the severity of the problem in deciduous and permanent dentition of children of low, middle and high income countries. Hence Dental Caries has been described as pandemic. While dental caries has declined in many countries, the problems still persist amongst the developing and disadvantaged groups in developed and developing countries.

Since ages sugar has been implicated as the arch criminal of dental caries. Dental caries is associated with the high consumption of sugar. Over the years sugar consumption has increased many folds in developed as well as developing countries. So the prevalence of tooth decay has also been increasing steadily. Now the researchers now have come with the evidence that consumption of handful of raisins can prevent tooth decay. It is traditionally thought that eating sweets, sticky foods like raisins increases the risk of caries because they grab on to the surfaces of teeth.

The recent study conducted in USA Department of Food and Nutrition reveal that eating raisins may protect against cavities. According to researchers raisins contain five phytochemicals, plant antioxidants including oleanolic acids which help to stop the growth of bacteria that causes dental caries. The phytochemical found in resin also prevents unfriendly bacteria such as Mutans Streptococci from sticking to the surface of teeth so they are less likely to cause cavities. The researchers recommend that if raisins are consumed



in daily breakfast they may have excellent impact as resin can interfere with proliferation of bacteria like S.mutans and can prevent attachment to enamel. Most commercial cereals contain raisins that are full with sugar. It is better to add unsweetened raisins to cereals. The bigger threat to dental health are sugar saturated cookies, candies and other sweeteners that offer no nutritional value. At least raisins have significant amount of antioxidants which is health beneficial.

Various studies i.e. Experimental, Animal and Epidemiological carried out throughout the world confirm the correlation between sugar consumption and tooth decay. Now the findings that raisins can prevent tooth decay may prove to be of immense and paramount importance in combating tooth decay. However, the findings that raisins can prevent tooth decay needs to be corroborated with further studies with evidence. As of today, the problem is unanswered as how some individual's inspite of consuming high sugar remains caries free and whereas individuals consuming less sugar are prone to severe decay.

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Access this article online	
Quick Response Code:	Website: www.contempclindent.org
	DOI: 10.4103/0976-237X.114837

How to cite this article: Damle SG. Does raisins protect against cavities?. Contemp Clin Dent 2013;4:131.