

Public Health Association Media release

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Junk food sugar resistant to even regular teeth brushing: new NZ research

New research into the effect of junk food sugars has found the damage they do to teeth is so severe that not even good oral hygiene can completely counter it.

“Undoubtedly the mother of all evils is fizzy drink, because it combines huge amounts of sugar with acid – both deadly to the health of teeth,” the Dental Association’s Deepa Krishnan told the Public Health Association conference at Lincoln University in Canterbury today.

Ms Krishnan has been studying the link between consumption of junk food and dental damage in 13-17 year olds. She says even teens with good teeth brushing habits are at higher risk of dental caries (holes) if they also consume junk food and drinks, than those teens who are not junk food junkies.

“The study suggests the effects of junk food extend beyond poor nutrition, obesity and its associated risks, to poor oral health, which remains the most common chronic disease in New Zealand.

“It is unfortunate that only 21 percent of young New Zealanders consider limiting sugar as part of healthy eating. Dietary habits formed during adolescent years can influence eating and drinking habits in later life”.

Dental diseases are expensive to treat. Teens are eligible to receive free, publicly-funded oral health services until the age of 18. In the 2009-10 year, the government spent \$38m treating the teeth of 185,000 adolescents.

“New Zealanders have increased their sugar intake almost 20 percent in the last 30 years. Easy accessibility and affordability of junk food, particularly sweet drinks, in our environment is ensuring this will not be reversed any time soon and the country will have to face rising costs to repair the damage done during adolescence,” Ms Krishnan says.

Media are invited to attend the whole or any part of the conference.

To arrange interviews with Deepa Krishnan or any Conference speaker, please contact Penny Cooper (Conference media liaison): 0274 547 584.

Links:

- [Conference website](#)
- [Conference handbook and programme](#)
- [Presenter abstracts and information](#)
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