

Xylitol gum for prevention of dental carie

Nine hundred twenty-one children (aged 3-6 years) attending daycare centers in Finland were randomly assigned to receive xylitol chewing gum (one piece, three times a day, each chewed for 5-10 minutes, for a total of 2.5 g/day of xylitol) or to brush their teeth after lunch. The respective treatments were continued for periods of one to three years, with one to four months off during the summers. At age nine years, the proportion of children who were caries-free was 57% in the xylitol group, compared with 49% in the brushing group ($p < 0.05$). No significant difference between groups was seen at ages three or seven years.

Comment: These results indicate that regular chewing of xylitol-containing gum is at least as effective as tooth brushing for the prevention of dental caries in children aged 3-6 years. Xylitol is a non-nutritive sweetener that has been demonstrated in several studies to help prevent the development of dental caries. The anti-caries effect of xylitol is presumably related to its capacity to inhibit the growth of *Streptococcus mutans*, a component of mouth flora that has been implicated in the pathogenesis of caries. The beneficial effect of xylitol chewing gum appears to be most pronounced for teeth that erupt after the commencement of gum chewing, as opposed to teeth that are already present when the child starts using the gum. One study has demonstrated that mothers can prevent the development of dental caries in their children by chewing xylitol gum, beginning three months after the birth of the baby until the child is two years old.

Kovari H, et al. Use of xylitol chewing gum in daycare centers: a follow-up study in Savonlinna, Finland. *Acta Odontol Scand* 2003;61:367-370.

source: Alan R. Gaby

Healthy Tips



Tips On Weight Management

The most effective diet is not a diet at all, but a gradual change in eating and physical activity habits that you can continue for the rest of your life. The best way to find a safe, healthy and effective weight reduction and maintenance program is to seek the advice of your health care provider.

An efficient way to lose weight is to reduce the number of calories and improve the quality of the foods you choose. It is best to lose weight slowly but steadily, so you can maintain your ideal weight after you have reached your goal.

A weight reduction diet needs to provide adequate nutrition, a good variety of foods and a reduction in calories. This is usually best done by limiting fat, especially saturated fat, in the diet. Pregnant women should not go on a weight reduction diet. Other Helpful Hints

- Sit down and relax while you eat your meals
- Avoid distractions such as the telephone and television
- Chew your food thoroughly to help digestion
- Eat small, frequent meals.