



Is your college student at higher risk for dental decay?

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*Commentary by Dr. Rashmi (Rush) Bhatnagar
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With the holidays over, students are back in college. Parents may have noticed that their child has lost weight, gained weight, or changed their daily hygiene habits after a semester at college. Parents may have sent their child to the dentist during the holidays, and may have found their child came back with more cavities than before college.

The American Hygienist's Dental Association (AHDA) states that college students are at higher risk for dental decay due to their unhealthy living and high stress levels.

With the all-nighters and the long hours of studying, many students find themselves without a set schedule for oral hygiene or eating times. Students may be munching on snacks throughout the night, drinking caffeinated drinks non-stop and skipping their tooth-brushing times.

This constant eating, drinking and oral care will cause increased acidity in the mouth. Dental decay is caused by the acidic waste products produced by oral bacteria. Therefore, the combination of the acidic environment and the increased oral bacteria waste product will accelerate tooth decay.

The AHDA gives the following tips to help college students prevent dental decay:

1. Drink carbonated soft drinks and sweetened liquids in moderation.
2. Swish out mouth with water to dilute sugar and acid.
3. Never consume soft drinks or sugary snacks at bedtime.
4. Use a remineralizing toothpaste with high fluoride availability.
5. Do not brush teeth for at least one hour after an erosive challenge (such as consumption of a highly acidic beverage).
6. Avoid any erosion-inducing habits such as sipping, swishing or holding drinks in the mouth.
7. Get regular dental cleanings to remove plaque build-up.
8. Include sweets as part of your meals, as opposed to consuming them throughout the day, to reduce number of daily acid challenges.

Dr. Rashmi (Rush) Bhatnagar, DMD, MPH, can be contacted at (480) 598-5900 or visit www.BellaVistaDentalCare.com.