

California Raisins UK Trade Press Release



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CAN ADDING CALIFORNIA RAISINS MAKE CEREALS MORE TOOTH FRIENDLY?

By Rick Miller, Clinical and Sports Dietitian, Harley Street, London

The humble bowl of breakfast cereal is still the number one choice for Brits to start their first meal of the day, with **34% of us tucking into a bowl each and every day.**

National Cereal Day, on 7th March, celebrates this fact.



So whilst breakfast might not be the first meal that springs to mind when you think of foods that contribute to tooth decay – however, that's exactly what appears to be happening as we get fuelled up for the day.

THINK RAISINS. THINK CALIFORNIA

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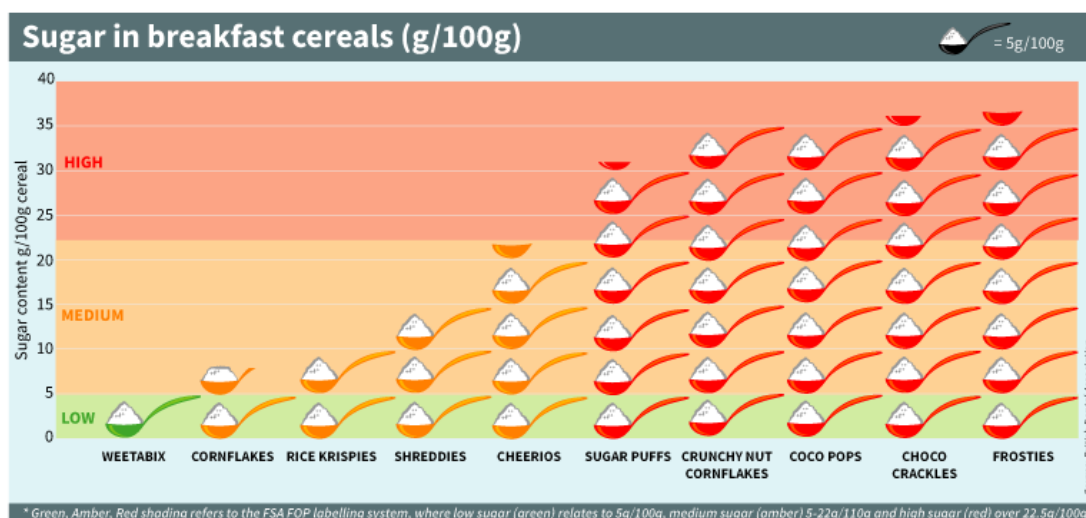
Only last year, a large review of the added sugar content of many breakfast cereals targeted at children, were **slammed for 'misleading claims' by dentists**. Tactics such as promoting vitamins, minerals and wholegrain content of the cereal were often used to distract from the added sugar content. In one example, a serving of a sugary cereal provided over half the recommended daily sugar intake for 4-6 years olds.

To diligent parents around the UK, this is worrying news.

As a nation we are absolutely consuming too much of the wrong types of sugar and the truth about how these sugars affect oral health was covered in the 2018 article **'Have we got our perception of raisins and oral health all wrong?'**.

You may be thinking, what's the healthier solution?

Time to get smart about breakfast time. I would agree with the dental experts' recommendations that we avoid sugar coated cereals entirely and opt for wholegrain, low sugar choice. As you can see from the British Dental Association's chart below, a no-added sugar, wholegrain cereal such as Weetabix, Bran Flakes, Shredded wheat or Porridge Oats are a much better choice in terms of overall sugar content compared to the 'kids cereals' such as Frosties, Coco Pops and Sugar Puffs.



Source: British Dental Association

So sugary cereals are out and wholegrain, no-added sugar cereals are in. But what if California Raisins could make breakfast an even more tooth friendly choice?

Well, this has been investigated. A randomised study with 20 children was conducted that looked at the effect of Bran Flakes, a wholegrain breakfast cereal, raisins or a combination of the two (raisins and Bran Flakes together) on dental plaque formation.

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When we eat any food that contains some dietary sugar it causes the pH (a measure of acidity) of our mouth and around our teeth to fall – making our mouths more ‘acidic’.

The acid is produced by bacteria living in our mouth breaking those food-based sugars down. The acids then start to erode the coating on the teeth, the enamel, and this eventually leads to ‘dental cavities’ the painful, black holes in teeth.

The speed at which your mouth returns to a normal, neutral pH after this acid attack helps dentists and other healthcare professionals understand the effect of different foods on dental health and why brushing, flossing and having your teeth checked regularly is so important to protect them.

The scientists found Bran Flakes or raisins alone caused less acidity than sugar water but interestingly, adding raisins to the Bran Flakes helped them even further!

Dried fruit such as California Raisins do not contain added sugars, unlike sugar coated breakfast cereals, that contain sugars such as sucrose. It is these sugars, found in sugary soft drinks, sweets, confectionary, biscuits, cakes and some breakfast cereals, that mouth bacteria particularly like to feast on and cause tooth decay.

Instead, the natural sweetness of California Raisins, which comes from a mixture of sugars called glucose and fructose (100% sun-dried), appear to be much less likely to cause dental caries.

Additionally, raisins also contain phytochemicals, antioxidants found in plants that fight these bacteria.

Do you believe raisins are ‘sticky’ and cling to teeth? Another study suggests otherwise – against a test mixture of 21 different foods raisins were amongst the ‘poorly retained’ group, meaning they didn’t appear to stick to the teeth and were cleared pretty quickly.

Dr Christine Wu, a leading US Dentist had this to say about raisins and stickiness:

“Foods that are sticky do not necessarily cause tooth decay,” says Dr. Wu. “It is mainly the added sugar – the sucrose – that contributes to the problem. Moreover, raisins contain mainly fructose and glucose, not sucrose, the main culprit in oral disease.”

Conclusion

Breakfast is a great way to give our children some incredibly nutritious foods before they start their day; but added sugars in their favourite box of cereal might be setting them up for an oral health disaster. **Maybe it’s time to shake up the breakfast of your little champions** for good and opt for a no-added sugar, wholegrain cereal with a sprinkling of California Raisins.

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