

ORAL HEALTH FACT SHEET FOR JOB CORPS STUDENTS

Should I limit drinking soda/sports drinks?

YES! People your age are drinking more soft drinks than ever, both in school and at home. In 1977, 12 to 19-year-olds drank 16 ounces of soda a day. In 1996, this same age group consumed an average of 28 ounces a day. Sugar is not only harmful to teeth, but acidic flavor additives can erode and damage tooth enamel. This is also the case with sports drinks; drinking too many of these beverages and their prolonged contact with teeth can be very harmful. There are simple ways you can limit the harmful effects of these drinks:

- Limit consumption of soda and sports drinks
- Dilute sports drinks with water
- Don't hold or swish drinks in your mouth; use a straw to reduce contact with teeth
- Rinse your mouth with water after drinking to minimize the strength of the drink's acidity
- Chew sugarless gum after a drink to stimulate saliva



Job Corps students should consider seeing the center dentist for an oral examination. An oral examination can uncover minor problems before they become major ones!

Why should I make time for healthy habits?

You may be tempted to eat “nutrition” bars and fast food to help keep you alert and on schedule between classes and job training. However, this fast-paced lifestyle threatens to leave you with permanent damage to oral and overall health. To keep you on a healthy path:



- Eat healthy snacks such as apples
- Keep travel-size brushes in back packs to use after meals and snack
- Chew sugarless gum (with xylitol as the first ingredient) after eating to help cleanse your mouth and lower the level of caries-causing bacteria.
- Drink water instead of sugary beverages throughout the day to help clean your teeth of excess bacteria and food debris.

Why should I avoid oral piercings?



Tongue piercing remains a popular trend, but it is not always a healthy choice for your mouth. People chip teeth on tongue piercings while eating, sleeping, talking and chewing on the

jewelry. Tongue piercing commonly causes fractured teeth. The fracture can be confined to tooth enamel and require a filling, or it may go deeper, which can lead to a root canal or tooth extraction. Infections are also common with oral piercings. The tongue can swell after being punctured, and in some cases can become infected and swell so much that it can limit breathing. Unclean piercing equipment can cause other infections, such as blood-borne hepatitis.