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## **Summit Dental Arts: Xylitol**

Xylitol is a sugar alcohol sweetener used as a sugar substitute. It is all-natural and is found in the fibers of many fruits and vegetables and also occurs naturally in our bodies. Xylitol has been used as a sugar alternative for many years and has a variety of dental health benefits that may aid in the prevention of tooth decay, dry mouth and helping to repair damaged enamel. It is safe and convenient to use.

**Xylitol and cavity prevention:** Xylitol does not break down like regular sugar and can help keep a neutral pH level in our mouth. It prevents harmful bacteria and plaque from sticking to our teeth, preventing an “acid attack”. The number of acid producing bacteria may be reduced up to 90%, leading to fewer cavities.

**Xylitol and dry mouth:** Chronic dry mouth can make it difficult to eat or talk. It can also cause bad breath, increase risk for cavities and make the mouth more vulnerable to infections. Saliva is needed to help protect our mouth and teeth. Xylitol gum, mints, or mouth rinses can be used safely on a daily basis to help stimulate salivary flow and protect the teeth from cavities. Regular use will help maintain a stable pH level in the mouth, preventing the formation of bacteria that can lead to tooth decay.

**Xylitol and enamel repair:** Xylitol helps reduce acid in dental plaque, resulting in decreased demineralization of the tooth enamel. It assists in the prevention of new cavities and, over time, can reverse early tooth decay that has already occurred. It is best to use Xylitol along with an OTC fluoride for the best cavity protection.

**How to use Xylitol:** Studies show that 4 to 12 grams of Xylitol per day are very effective. This can be achieved by using Xylitol-containing products 3 to 5 times a day. It is not necessary to use more than 15 grams per day as higher intakes yield diminishing dental benefits. Look for Xylitol sweetened products that encourage chewing or sucking to keep the Xylitol in contact with the teeth. It is best used after eating and in-between meals.

### **Recommended Xylitol Products**

- Xylitol Gum: Trident, Mentos, Ice Breakers-Ice Cubes gum, and Spry gum products.
- Xylitol Toothpaste: Jason brand toothpaste containing fluoride, Tom's of Maine Whole care toothpaste containing fluoride, Biotene brand toothpaste, Spry toothpaste products.
- Xylitol Mouth Rinses: Tom's of Maine Children's Anticavity fluoride rinse
- Xylitol Mints: Spry Products
- Xylitol is also available as a bulk food product.
- All are available locally at Wegman's Grocery store in Johnson City