



## NEWS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

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### **Simple School Lunch Makeover Can Bring Sugar Under Control** *Sugar count in many lunch time classics is equal to candy bars*

**Roanoke, Va. (Sept. 2, 2009)** – You wouldn’t send your children to school with a lunchbox full of candy bars, but you might be packing almost as much sugar when you send them off with some of the popular lunch time classics. Considering that most children brush their teeth in the morning and again before bed, the sugar they put in their mouths at lunch time could stay in there for a while, and that worries some dentists.

“When you start adding up the sugars found in some of the most common lunch items, you might be shocked,” said George Koumaras, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Virginia. “Making a few simple changes can lower the sugar count, which is better for their oral health and, ultimately, better for their bodies.”

Take, for example, the classic peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Toss in a box of raisins, a small container of applesauce and a single-serve carton of chocolate milk. While it sounds pretty healthy and balanced, the sugar total clocks in at a whopping 98 grams. An average candy bar contains about 25 grams of sugar.

Without making drastic changes, you can give this same lunch a sugar makeover.

Here’s how:

- Look for natural peanut butter (made without added sugar) and low or no sugar added jelly.
- Replace the white bread with whole wheat bread, and the regular applesauce with natural applesauce.
- Consider skipping the raisins -- in addition to their high sugar content, their stickiness can hold sugars against children’s teeth for prolonged periods of time.
- Swap the raisins for some mini carrots, and the chocolate milk for white milk.
- The new total? A more tooth-tolerable 31 grams of sugar.

It's easy to find alternatives to a number of other lunchbox standards too. Consider these examples:

- A tube of yogurt is a good option for boosting calcium with only 10 grams of sugar.
- Even better is a piece of string cheese, which also offers calcium but with zero grams of sugar.
- A fruit roll-up style snack has half the amount of sugar (7 grams) as fruit snacks in a pouch (14 grams).
- For a special treat, replace three chocolate, crème-filled cookies (at 13 grams of sugar), with three vanilla wafer cookies (4 grams of sugar).
- Bottled water to drink is an excellent, sugar-free alternative to sugar-packed apple juices and fruit juices.

If not removed by brushing and flossing, sugars in the mouth can contribute to tooth decay and cavities. Naturally occurring bacteria in the human mouth form a colorless, sticky film called plaque. Cavity-causing organisms within plaque feed on sugar and turn it into acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel and leads to tooth decay.

“Products and brands can vary greatly in sugar content, so it's important to read the nutrition labels on the foods you're buying,” says Koumaras. “A healthy and nutritious diet, paired with good oral hygiene at home and preventive care visits to the dentist can all go a long way toward protecting children against tooth decay.”

### **About Delta Dental of Virginia**

Delta Dental of Virginia, headquartered in Roanoke, was created in 1964 by the Virginia Dental Association and chartered by the General Assembly, as a not-for-profit service corporation the same year. Delta Dental provides employee dental benefits through a variety of managed fee-for-service and PPO plans covering over 1.3 million enrollees in over 3,200 groups. Delta Dental of Virginia is a member company of the Delta Dental Plans Association, the nation's largest, most experienced dental benefits carrier providing dental coverage to over 51.6 million people in over 93,000 groups across the nation.

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