

# The art of chewing

by George Meinig, D.D.S.

Dear Dr. Meinig: I have tried to give my children raw carrots as an after school snack instead of cookies but haven't had much success. You stated you gave them to your children. Did they just like them or how did you get them to eat them? E.B.C.

Dear E.B.C.: The switch-over from cookies, cake, crackers and similar snacks to raw foods wasn't easy. Part of the problem, and it's a big part, we unfortunately didn't learn until later. That is, a child's jaw muscle development must be strong enough to bite the carrot. Our preoccupation all these years with soft, gooey formulas and things cooked and smashed up leave little for our muscles of mastication to do.

It has been proven by a number of studies that much of our enjoyment of eating is associated with the activity of chewing. Children brought up on foods needing practically nothing but swallowing never learn the pleasure and satisfaction involved. This lack of use of one's jaws is part of the cause for crookedness of teeth.

In order to overcome the problems mushy food eating have created, a certain amount of common sense must be utilized. At first give your child small baby carrots or cut large ones into tiny carrot sticks. These are easier to bite and chew but are tougher than cookies. Such chewing results in mouth exercise and such efforts stimulate development of one's jaw muscles, toughens gums and the tissues that hold the teeth in their sockets. With time, as the child accepts more of these items, the strips are gradually made larger. Eventually there comes a day when you will find your youngster raiding the refrigerator for whole carrots, stalks of celery, raw potatoes, apples, nuts, sunflower seeds, etc. However, this will happen **only if the junk foods are unavallable**. The transition will never take place if the old sweet food items can still be found on your shelves.

While all of these statements have been leveled at children it should be noted that many adults suffer the same problems. The training period for oldsters is of course a bit more difficult but, nevertheless possible.

The task is impossible for the

people who have teeth missing here and there and for some of those who wear artificial teeth. Individuals who have lost all their teeth often find the tougher foods difficult to chew and quite naturally discover that they don't like such foods anymore. The real point is these soft, mushy, easy to chew foods are for the most part refined carbohydrates and that means a dietary change has been made to foods of poorer quality.

No, my girls didn't like carrots at first but one of them was seen so often after school with one in her mouth...the kids all called her "Bunny".

All of this mouth muscle training should really start at



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birth with breast feeding. The infant must work the jaws a good deal to breast feed. On the bottle, if they don't get it fast enough parents punch a bigger hole in the nipple. As soon as a baby can hold a chicken or other meat bone, a carrot or similar shaped vegetable, let them chew away. It makes teething easier, toughens and strengthens jaw muscles and gives no end of pleasure to the infant.

Adults chewing on bones experience the same satisfaction. Did you ever watch a dog chew and chew on a bone? What delight they have. Years ago there was a magazine ad that showed a picture of a man at a dinner party eating away at a roast beef bone. The caption read, "Horrid says Emily Post... splendid says your dentist."

Dear Dr. Meinig: Please say something about lactobacillus

causasicus and acidophilus found in kefir. Do you recommend kefir for a sugarless diet? F.V.B.

Dear F.V.B.: Kefir is a fermented milk product. The bacteria culture used is a non-pathogenic rod-shaped variety, producing large amounts of lactic acid from fermentable carbohydrates.

The caucasicus type of bacteria get their name from their place or origin, the Caucasus in Russia. It is made by milk being acted upon by Kefir grains. In some parts of Russia where such fermented milk is used, the people are known for their long, healthy life.

The lactobacillus acidophilus bacteria is a normal inhabitant of the bowels of infants and adults on high milk or carbohydrate diets. It's cousin, lactobacillus bulgaricus, that is present in our intestines in small amounts, is the same bacteria responsible for the fermenting of milk that make syogurt. Kefir is sometimes described as a liquid yogurt but it is a different product. I personally prefer and recommend the kefir made from raw milk. It is available in several flavors and has more food value than the pasteurized variety. Ask for it.

It is advisable to use kefir, yogurt or buttermilk after a bout with antibiotics as these products restore some of the normal bacteria in your intestines that are killed off by the medication.

Everyone has a question about nutrition. Send yours to: Dr. George E. Meinig, c/o OVN, Box 277, Ojal, CA 93023.