

The Truth about Cavities: A Parent's Guide

Many parents have questions about what causes cavities in their children. You may have heard it is due to poor oral hygiene, eating or drinking certain foods, or just "bad breeding." Actually, these are ALL factors that lead to decay! So what can we do?

Steps to help keep cavities away:

1. **Clean, clean, clean!** Brushing is very important to remove plaque, and most children up to at least the age of 6 (or when they can tie their own shoes,) need a parent to do the majority of the work. But did you know that many of the cavities seen in young children are found BETWEEN the teeth? This means flossing is just as important and should be done daily to clean the bacteria-filled, cavity-causing plaque between the teeth.



2. **Use fluoride!** Any child that can learn to spit out their toothpaste can use toothpaste with fluoride. In fact, you can increase the cavity-fighting effect of fluoride by also having your child swish and spit a commercial fluoride rinse. (Just make sure they won't swallow it!)
3. **Be careful not to share your saliva!** Parents can unknowingly pass cavity-causing bacteria from their own mouths to their children. It's as simple as sharing a cup or spoon. Take care to always give your child his or her own utensils and cups.
4. **BEWARE OF SUGAR!** The truth is cavities can't form unless the bacteria in the mouth



are fed sugar. There are many ways sugar can "sneak" into your diet. ANY LIQUID with sugar or corn syrup listed in the ingredients is harmful to teeth. This includes things we think of, such as soda and Kool-Aid, but did you know it also includes 100% fruit juice, Gatorade, and chocolate milk? Even watered-down versions of these are CAVITY-CAUSING DRINKS. Strictly limit all beverages other than water and white milk between meals. If you must give your child sweetened drinks, do so only with a meal as this will decrease the amount of time the bacteria can actively cause cavities.

We want to be partners in your child's oral health. Please let us know if you have any questions!



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