

Diet and Tooth Decay



Tooth decay (caries, cavities, rotten teeth) is caused by bacteria and is an active infection of the enamel. Tooth decay can cause tooth sensitivity, aching or bad breath. You may notice white, black, brown and yellow spots on your teeth or even feel holes in your teeth.

Seek advice from an oral health professional if you or your child is avoiding eating, or drinking, certain foods, or favouring one side of the mouth to chew on.

Most of the time though you won't feel any symptoms. The decay can progress unnoticed, and result in discoloured, broken teeth or tooth ache.



What causes tooth decay?

The main reason for tooth decay is diet and sugar intake. Decay can start as frosty white spots or black/brown and yellow spots. A good oral hygiene routine, balanced diet (reduce sugar intake) and support from an oral health professional can prevent these spots from progressing into active tooth decay.

Discoloured and decayed teeth



Suggestions

Review the sugary (or carbohydrate) rich foods that you eat or drink. Try to select healthier alternatives. It is important to select alternatives you like. For example, swap potato chips with a handful of nuts, reduce sugar in your drinks or swap apple juice with eating an apple.

Suggestions (cont.)

The bacteria causing tooth decay use carbohydrates as their energy source. By reducing the amount and frequency of carbohydrate rich foods, you will reduce the risk of dental decay, because the bacteria will not have the energy to turn carbohydrates into acids.

A well balanced diet provides you with the nutrients and energy you need to maintain health and this also benefits your mouth.

Develop a daily oral hygiene routine including brushing your teeth and cleaning between your teeth.

Always use a fluoridated toothpaste. Use age appropriate toothpaste options for children.

Minimise the frequency of snacking throughout the day and stick to eating at meal times or select tooth friendly alternatives.

Reduce or avoid drinking sugary and acidic drinks. Don't underestimate the amount of hidden sugars in flavoured milk or fruit juices. Choose a sugar free alternative or opt for plain water or tea, which are good alternatives. Sugar free soft drinks are an alternative as well, but sugar free soft drinks have other disadvantages.

Having a well balanced diet provides your cells with the nutrients and energy they need to maintain a healthy ecosystem for your mouth.



Daily oral care routine

Brush and clean between your teeth twice a day to maintain good oral health.



Use a fluoridated toothpaste

Fluoride toothpaste helps to protect your teeth and reduce your risk of dental decay.



Meal timing is important

Minimise the frequency of snacking and stick to eating at meals to reduce risk to teeth.



Reduce sugary foods & drinks

Reduce frequency and amount of carbohydrates and high sugar/acidic foods and drinks.



Eat a balanced diet

A balanced diet will help fuel your body and look after your mouth and teeth.

References

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