



KidCare

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Preventing Tooth Decay

fact:

You can prevent cavities and tooth decay

Good oral hygiene can help you avoid tooth decay. Below are some tips to help prevent tooth decay.

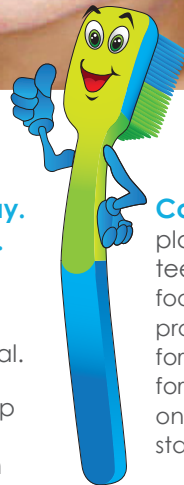
Brush with the type of toothpaste your dentist recommends after eating or drinking. Brush your teeth at least twice a day and ideally after every meal.

Floss your teeth every day. Ask your dentist for help and instructions on how to floss your teeth effectively. The purpose of flossing is to remove the bacteria from between your teeth (where a toothbrush can't reach) every 24 hours, so that they can't stick (plaque) to the teeth and cause decay.

Rinse your mouth. If your dentist feels you have a high risk of developing tooth decay, he or she may recommend that you use a mouth rinse with fluoride.

Visit your dentist regularly. Get professional teeth cleanings and regular oral exams, which can help prevent problems or spot them early. Your dentist can recommend a schedule that's best for you.

Drink more water. Drink water after meals and snacks, in addition to brushing twice a day and flossing every day.



Consider dental sealants. Dental sealants are a thin, plastic coating applied to the chewing surface of back teeth. Sealants fill the deep grooves that tend to collect food and the bacteria that cause tooth decay. The sealant protects tooth enamel from plaque and acid. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends sealants for all school-age children. Research shows that sealants not only protect teeth, but can also stop decay in the beginning stages, preventing future cavities.

Avoid sugary snacks and drinks. Whenever you eat sugary foods or drink beverages other than water, you help the bacteria in your mouth create acids that can destroy your tooth enamel. If you snack or drink throughout the day, your teeth are under constant attack.

Eat nutritious and balanced meals. Avoid foods that get stuck in grooves and pits of your teeth for long periods, such as candy or cookies, or brush and floss soon after eating them. However, foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables increase saliva flow, which often helps balance out the acidity of the bacteria. In addition, sugar-free gum and unsweetened drinks, including coffee and tea can help wash away food particles.

