

Tooth Decay

This leaflet has been given to you as we have concerns about your tooth decay. Please read it carefully and feel free to discuss any points with a member of our team. The leaflet should:

1. Inform you about your tooth decay
2. Offer some strategies to address this serious issue

Tooth decay (caries) was extremely rare until refined sugars became a part of our diet. There are virtually no real conditions which cause 'weak teeth.'

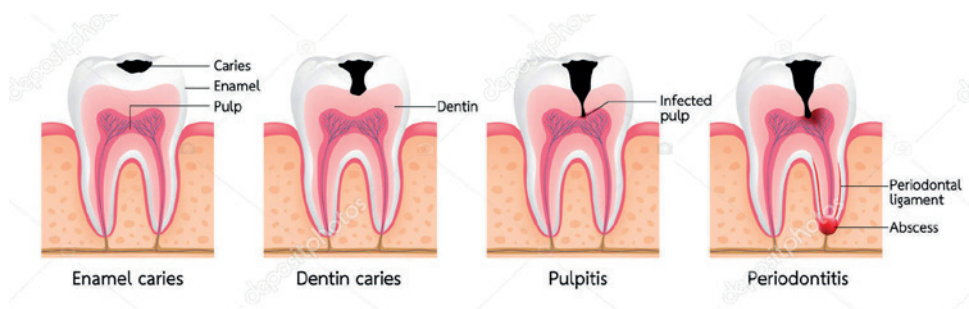
What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay, also known as dental decay or dental caries, is when sugar from foods and drinks are turned into acid and dissolve layers of your teeth.

How does tooth decay occur?

Soon after you brush your teeth, a thin, sticky layer of bacteria starts to form on the surfaces of all your teeth. This layer of bacteria is called plaque.

When you eat anything sugary, the bacteria in the plaque turn the sugar into acid. This acid softens and dissolves the hard enamel surface of your teeth. Over time, this can cause cavities (holes) to form in your teeth. This is known as tooth decay or caries.



Why does tooth decay matter?

If a cavity is left untreated it can destroy your tooth and kill the nerves inside the tooth, which may result in a painful abscess, an area of infection at the root tip. Once an abscess forms, it can only be treated with root canal treatment, surgery or by removing the tooth.

Preventing decay from occurring can prevent discomfort and save you time and money.

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Decay and sugar go hand in hand. No matter what you think or have been told, decay is caused by sugar going into your mouth.

Most sugars are found in processed and manufactured foods and drinks including: Sweets and chocolates, cakes, puddings and biscuits, fruit pies, pastries, buns, ketchup, ice cream, fresh fruit juice, sugar in tea and coffee, dried fruits, alcopops, even some cereal bars and yoghurts.

How can I prevent decay?

Try to limit sugar to mealtimes instead of as a snack to minimize the number of times that your teeth are exposed to acid. Your teeth can take up to 4 hits of sugar a day (including drinks and meals). A sugar hit is anything that contains sugar in any form. For example, 3 daily meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) count as 3 hits of sugar leaving 1 – 2 for the rest of the day. Going above this increases the acidity in the mouth leading to decay.

Brush your teeth twice a day using a toothpaste that contains 1450 ppm fluoride

Clean between your teeth using floss or interdental brushes once a day

Spit out after brushing and do not rinse your mouth with water – the water washes the fluoride away

Avoid sugary food and drinks before bed as there is less saliva flow at night to wash them away

Use sugar free medicines in preference to those with sugar

Swap sugary snacks for those with less sugar

Attend for check-ups regularly, your dentist can monitor your teeth and take x-rays from time to time to detect decay before it spreads.

If you are at high risk of tooth decay your dentist may recommend a fluoride mouthwash or apply fluoride varnish to your teeth.

Remember: You are in control of your dental health.