

Dental Caries & Diet



If there was no SUGAR
there would be no
CAVITIES!



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How does dental decay occur?

Plaque & bacteria + sugar or starch = an **acidic** environment. Starch & sugar are broken down by **bacteria** in the mouth (*a natural bacteria that is always present*). A by-product of this process is **acid**. The mouth goes from a basic or neutral environment to acidic environment each time food is consumed. This can soften the enamel of the teeth for 5-15 minutes each time food is consumed

REDUCING THE RISK OF DECAY

☞ Brush daily with a fluoridated toothpaste. Fluoride gel may be recommended when there is a high risk for cavities.

☞ Starchy foods (such as bread, cereal, pasta) are necessary for a healthy diet. Follow Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating to find healthy choices.

☞ Minimize the time teeth are exposed to starch & sugar by eating these foods with meals rather than snacking on them throughout the day

☞ Substitute sugary snacks with sugar-free gum and mints (especially made with xylitol). This can also help reduce dental cavities by increasing the saliva flow.

☞ Drink high sugar beverages through a straw, then rinse mouth with water, and brush within 30mins.

☞ Rinsing with water or chewing sugarless gum helps cleanse the teeth after a snack.

RISK FACTORS

- **Poor oral hygiene**
- **Frequent or prolonged intake of sugary foods (such as sucking a hard candy)** enables the bacteria to maintain an acidic environment on the surfaces of the teeth
- **The consistency of the sugary foods.** *Soft and sticky foods* cling to the biting surfaces of the teeth and stay there until brushed off. *Hard candy* allows the saliva to flow around the teeth causing decay between the teeth as well as the front and back of the teeth.
- **Currently having one or more dental cavities** increases the risk of developing more
- **Decreased saliva flow (dry mouth)** slows the clearance of the sugary liquid from the oral cavity

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Healthy Populations Institute

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