

Away, Tooth Decay

Dental caries (aka tooth decay) is among the world's most common health problems. Though it is especially common in children and older adults, it can afflict anyone with teeth, including infants with newly erupted baby teeth.

HOW CARIES DEVELOPS

Dental caries develop when bacteria in the mouth interact with and break down sugars in our diet to produce acids, which then damage the hard surfaces (enamel) of our teeth. This is a process that can occur without any noticeable discomfort. If left untreated, decay can then progress into the deeper layers of our teeth and eventually cause a toothache.

WARNING SIGNS OF DENTAL CARIES

As dental caries develops, some signs and symptoms you may experience are:

- Toothache
- Tooth sensitivity
- Mild to sharp pain when eating or drinking foods that are sweet, hot, or cold
- Visible holes or pits in your teeth, which can also trap food
- Pain on biting
- Pus from the gums around your tooth, especially when you press on your gums

LOWER YOUR RISK

Here are some tips to minimise your risk of dental caries:

Practise good oral hygiene

Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride-containing toothpaste. To clean the spaces between your teeth, use either dental floss or an inter-dental brush.

Visit your dentist regularly

The best way to check for the presence of dental caries is to visit your dentist, who can do a thorough oral examination and a professional clean for you. Dental X-rays may be recommended to check for dental caries in areas of your teeth that cannot be inspected visually.

Consider dental sealants and fluoride treatments for your teeth

Both are preventive treatments that can reduce your risk for dental caries significantly.

Avoid frequent snacking and sipping on soft drinks

Oral bacteria can break down the sugars in the food you take to form acids that attack the teeth. If you snack or drink throughout the day, your teeth will be under constant attack.

Eat tooth-healthy foods

Some foods and beverages are better for your teeth than others. Avoid foods that get stuck in grooves and pits of your teeth for long periods, such as chips, candy or cookies. Instead, eat food that protects your teeth, such as cheese, which some research shows may help prevent cavities, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, which increase saliva flow, and unsweetened coffee, tea and sugar-free gum, which help wash away food particles.

As with all medical conditions, prevention is better than cure. If you suspect that you may be suffering from dental caries, or would like a thorough oral examination, please contact us at Thomson Dental Centre or visit your regular dentist.

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