



## Caries

Caries or "cavities" is the most common disease of the mouth, and the most common non-communicable disease in the world. Around 70%\* of all Norwegian 18-year-olds have had one or more teeth with cavities.

### **The teeth are made up of three layers: enamel, dentin, and pulp (nerve).**

Caries occurs when bacteria remain on the teeth over time. A bacterial biofilm (plaque) can form on the surface of the teeth when we eat or drink sugary foods or beverages. The bacteria form acid, which makes the enamel on the tooth weaker and weaker. Finally, the enamel may break down and holes form in the tooth.

### **How to prevent caries?**

The most important thing you can do to keep your teeth healthy is to brush your teeth every morning and every night with fluoride toothpaste (after breakfast and just before going to bed). The purpose of tooth brushing is to brush away the bacteria that can contribute to caries. The fluoride toothpaste helps to strengthen your teeth against caries. To give your teeth the best possible benefits from the fluoride toothpaste, you should avoid rinsing your mouth with water after brushing and wait to eat or drink for the first hour after brushing.

You then give the fluoride time to work and protect your teeth well!

Your dentist or dental hygienist often also recommend that you floss or use interdental brushes daily, to clean between the teeth. In addition, the use of extra fluoride is recommended if you have an increased risk of caries. This includes fluoride tablets or rinses.

In addition to brushing twice a day, the saliva you have in your mouth also helps as your own defense mechanism against caries. To protect your teeth well, saliva needs some time work between each meal. If you frequently eat and drink something sugary, saliva will have less opportunity to protect your teeth from caries. Having regular meals and drinking water when thirsty therefore contribute to good dental health! You are then helping to give your own mouth good working conditions to prevent cavities in your teeth.



Children should be assisted with brushing their teeth until they master it well enough themselves. This varies from child to child, but assisting them until around 10 years of age is recommended.

### How is caries treated?

At an early stage, caries damage can easily be treated with good cleaning and fluoride. Brushing thoroughly with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day and taking fluoride supplements (tablets or rinses) can stop the caries attack. Your dentist or dental hygienist can give you good advice on this. They can also give you extra fluoride treatment by brushing your teeth with concentrated fluoride. If you manage to stop the caries attack early, you will not have to repair the tooth with a filling.

Once the caries attack has passed through the tooth's enamel, the tooth must be repaired with a filling to stop the development of the caries attack. These caries attacks can not be stopped only with good cleaning and fluoride, they must be treated by a dentist. The dentist removes the part of the tooth that is damaged and then seals the hole with a filling. A filling is a white material that replaces the part of the tooth that had to be removed. In more severe cases, a crown may also be needed.

Even a repaired tooth can get new holes, if you do not clean it well every day. If the caries attack becomes deep and enters the pulp (nerve), a root filling may be necessary.

### Good oral health habits

- Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Clean between the teeth every day
- Use fluoride supplements if it is recommended for you
- Avoid snacking between meals
- Drink water when thirsty
- Ask your dentist or dental hygienist if you have any questions.

Contact your nearest public dental clinic if you need additional information.

(\* percentage from 2019 - taken from ssb.no).