

Fluoride

Fluoride is a natural mineral, that has been found to cut dental decay by 40-60%. Fluoride helps strengthen the tooth enamel by assisting the remineralisation process, and making the teeth more resistant to acid attacks and dental decay. Fluoride can be found in toothpaste which provides the easiest way to fluoride exposure. Fluoride also comes in specially formulated gels, drops, tablets and mouthwashes. If a mouthwash is used it is important that it is used at a different time of day to brushing.

Children can start to use an adult toothpaste from about the age of 7 years, however this must be supervised by an adult to make sure the child does not swallow large quantities as the fluoride content is higher than a children's toothpaste. Too much ingested fluoride can result in fluorosis, white marks on the teeth and sickness.

Children that are at high risk of dental decay can have extra fluoride applied to the teeth by the dental team, this is done by means of standard trays and fluoride gel. Children should be supervised when using fluoride toothpaste, ingestion of too much fluoride during the development of the teeth can cause discolouration and pitting on the adult teeth (enamel Fluorosis). Regular dental care should still be encouraged to provide and maintain oral health.

Remember prevention is better than cure!



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the dental spa
aesthetic and implant dentist



Dental care for your **child**

Fissure Sealants

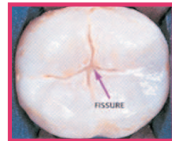
Children's permanent teeth can benefit from the placement of a fissure sealant. The biting surfaces of back teeth are shaped like "hills and valleys" known as cusps and fissures. The fissures are major sites for dental decay.

Toothbrush bristles are unable to get into the narrow fissures to clean, remove plaque and bacteria; which produce acid when sugar is eaten, causing decay.

To help prevent decay, the fissures are sealed over with a plastic coating (fissure sealant). This means your child's back teeth (molars) will be less likely to need fillings at a later date.

Placing a fissure sealant is a painless procedure as there is no cutting away of tooth tissue – no drilling.





Plaque Control

Daily brushing is important to remove dental plaque from the teeth; if it is not removed it continues to build up and can cause dental decay and gum disease. Teeth should be brushed in a systematic approach. The brush head should be small and able to reach the back teeth. A fluoride toothpaste should be used, a pea-sized amount for older children and a small scrapping of toothpaste for young children, toothpaste should be spat out with no rinsing with water, so the fluoride stays in the mouth for longer and protects the teeth for longer. The brush should be half on the teeth and half on the gums when brushing. A small backwards-forwards scrubbing action is adopted. Young children tend to forget the new adult back teeth and the upper front teeth. Teeth should be brushed twice a day, especially before bedtime as the saliva flow slows down. Brushing at this time helps repair the teeth.

Electric toothbrushes can be better for children as they may be more inclined to use them due to the novelty factor. Children should practice cleaning their teeth themselves, however they do not have the practical skills to complete this effectively, therefore an adult should brush the teeth gently too, children over 7 years may still require encouragement and supervision.

Dietary Advice

Decay is not caused by the **amount** of sugar eaten, but the **frequency** of the sugar within the diet. It takes approximately 30-40 minutes for acids to clear from the mouth after eating or drinking. It is therefore important to limit the number of juice or carbonated drinks and snacks eaten.

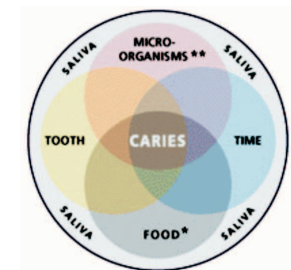
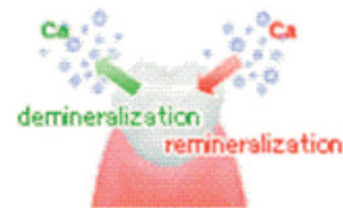
Every time something is eaten, the teeth are affected, however they can recover as long as they have enough time to repair themselves. It is important to have a balanced diet, therefore it is not necessary to cut out all sweet foods; but sweet foods and soft drinks should be limited to meal times. **Water** and **milk** are the only safe drinks for the teeth which can be drunk throughout the day. Safe snacks include fruit, vegetables and cheese.

Dental Decay

Dental decay is the main cause for loss of teeth, it is the result of the interaction of dental plaque, bacteria and sugars from the diet, which are broken down, over a period of time, to produce acids. Dental decay will occur only when all the factors are present within a sufficient time period. The acid produced, decreases the pH within the mouth.

At a certain level, minerals from the tooth surface are lost (demineralisation); this process is reversible (remineralisation). Minerals from the saliva can replace the minerals lost as long as the pH of the mouth returns to its baseline. However if this acidic environment occurs too frequently the process is not reversible and it will progress to cause a cavity.

Diet, plaque control and fluoride can assist in the remineralisation process and help prevent dental decay.



* Fermentable carbohydrate
** Particularly streptococcus mutans