



## Keeping Your Kids Cavity Free

Cavities: the modern horror for young kids. The truth is that with the proper knowledge and care, today's kids can remain virtually cavity free. Parents often worry about how to keep their children from getting cavities. With today's understanding of cavity formation you can save your children from the stress of cavity related dental visits.

### What Causes Cavities ?

In the war against cavities, bacteria is public enemy #1. Millions of these bacteria live, work and play in our mouths. Here they feed on left over food particles, creating acid in the process. It is this acid byproduct which eats into tooth enamel and causes cavities.

Good oral hygiene is essential to cavity prevention as it removes bacteria and the left over food particles they feast on. For infants, a wet gauze or clean washcloth will wipe away the plaque that contains bacteria from teeth and gums. Try to get your young ones to brush their own teeth. Because children under the age of seven do not have the manual dexterity to effectively brush their teeth it is important that you brush their teeth after they have done so.

Make sure that your kids get an adequate amount of fluoride. Fluoride is the single most influential factor in the decrease in cavities among today's children. Fluoride incorporates itself into tooth enamel, making it more resistant to acid attack. Most children get adequate amounts of fluoride because it is added to the municipal water supply. However, if your city or town does not add fluoride to its water supply, consult your physician about whether or not to give your child fluoride supplements. Parents should be careful that their children do not get too much fluoride. As with other vitamins and minerals essential for a healthy body, too much of a good thing can be detrimental. Too much fluoride can cause a condition known as fluorosis in which brown spots appear on children's teeth. The primary way children get too much fluoride is by swallowing fluoride toothpaste. Remember, children need only a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. Have them spit toothpaste out instead of swallowing it.

### Watch What Your Kids Eat

Many dentally conscious parents give their kids healthy snacks or natural foods instead of candy and other sugar laden treats. Surprisingly, many of these healthy foods are just as bad for children's teeth as candy, if not worse. You see, bacteria utilize not only the sugar found in candy and other sweets, but they also use the natural sugars found in fruits and milk, as well as the carbohydrates found in foods such as potato chips, pasta, and bread. Parents should be especially careful of sticky and gooey foods. These foods, such as peanut butter and raisins, tend to stick to teeth providing a constant supply of sugar and carbohydrates for bacteria.

What should parents do ? While parents should feed their children as before, they should also remind them to thoroughly wash all foods down after meals with a beverage, preferably water. If possible, children should brush their teeth after each meal. This will ensure that as little food as possible stays in the mouth where bacteria can feed on it.

One day soon cavities may be a thing of the past. Until then, proper and consistent use of fluoride, good oral hygiene, and regular dental visits can help children remain cavity free.