

Treating Tooth Decay

Dental caries is a bacterial infection that causes tooth decay. Risk factors include tooth susceptibility, the presence of certain plaque bacteria that produce acid (and flourish in an acidic low pH environment), low salivary flow (which reduces buffering, therefore increasing acidity), dental restorations (fillings, crowns, bridges, etc.), oral appliances (braces, retainers, night guards, partial dentures, etc.) and diet (which may contain sugar and acids). **Minimally invasive dentistry** attempts to preserve tooth by: altering oral environment to minimize unhealthy plaque; promote decay resistant teeth; encourage reversal of early decay; and conservatively restore only those cavities that cannot be reversed. We now have many products that can influence each of these factors to minimize future tooth decay and even reverse early damage to teeth. It continues to be imperative that cavities that harbor the growth of the disease causing bacteria are restored and failing dental restorations are replaced.

The following represent many factors that will contribute to the health of your teeth:

PLAQUE CONTROL: Thorough, gentle (soft brush, light pressure) brushing (minimum morning + bedtime), and regular flossing to disorganize and remove excess plaque.

DIET: Minimize frequency of foods and beverages that are acidic or high in sucrose (refined sugar).

FLUORIDE: Acts to inhibit acid forming bacteria, make enamel more resistant to demineralization, and aids in remineralization of damaged enamel. Supervise use with children to avoid swallowing.

Toothpaste

_____ OTC: 0.2%; most brands

_____ Rx: 1.1%; e.g. PreviDent 5000**

Rinse

_____ OTC: 0.05%; daily use (1-2 times); e.g. Act (Johnson & Johnson)

_____ OTC Combination: CariFree Maintenance Rinse* (0.05% + xylitol + pH buffer)

_____ Rx: 0.2%: weekly use; e.g. PreviDent Rinse**

(Over)

XYLITOL: A naturally occurring low calorie sugar substitute used as a sweetener, xylitol has been shown to inhibit the growth of acid producing bacteria and reduce the transmission of these organisms between family members (mother to child infection). Used after meals or snacks (or 4 times/day), the recommended daily intake is 6 to 10 grams. Xylitol is diabetic safe.

_____OTC: gum or candy (mints); e.g. CariFree*, Spry, Epic, Starbucks

BUFFERS: Especially important when salivary flow is low (dry mouth or xerostomia), buffers are important to increase pH and thus decrease the acid environment that damages teeth and promotes the growth of decay causing bacteria.

Baking Soda

_____OTC Rinse: 2 tsp baking soda + 16 oz water; rinse and expectorate as needed

_____OTC Toothpaste: Arm & Hammer Dental Care

_____OTC Gum: Orbit White (Wrigley)

Spray

_____OTC: CariFree Boost* = buffer + xylitol + glycerin (moisture); use as needed

RECALDENT: Derived from milk protein (casein), this product brings calcium phosphate to demineralized enamel and increases pH to promote remineralization (healing) of early decay and white spots. This product is also effective in reducing sensitivity.

Paste

_____Rx: MI Paste**; multiple daily applications with fingertip

OTC = Over the Counter

Rx = Prescription

*CariFree Maintenance Rinse, xylitol gum, and Boost are available at carifree.com

**Available from our office: PreviDent 5000 (\$10), PreviDent Rinse (\$12), and MI Paste (\$18)