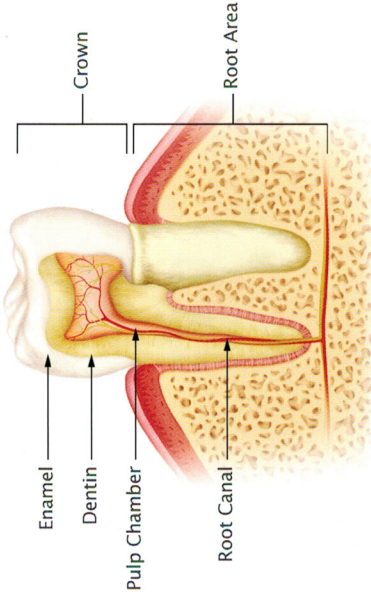


What is dental cavity?

Dental cavity is the medical term for tooth decay. Tooth decay refers to the destruction of tooth structure and can affect both the enamel (the outer coating of the tooth) and the dentin (softer layer beneath the enamel) of the tooth.



How is it caused?

Many different types of bacteria normally live in the human mouth. They accumulate (along with saliva, food particles and other natural substances) on the surface of the teeth in a sticky film called plaque. Some of the bacteria in plaque can convert sugar and carbohydrates (starches) in the foods we eat into acids. These acids dissolve minerals from the surface of the tooth, forming microscopic pits or erosions that get larger over time, causing cavities.

Who is at risk?

Cavities are generally more common among children but adults are also at risk. Some factors increase the risk:

- Diet high in carbohydrates (sugar and starch)
- Consumption of unfluoridated water
- Dry mouth
- Some medications
- Improper oral hygiene

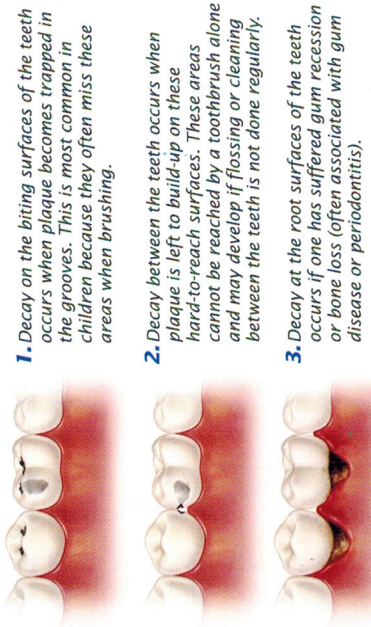
What are the signs of tooth decay?

Cavities may affect more than one tooth at a time and may affect more than one site on the same tooth. The most common symptoms are:

- A cavity or hole in the tooth
- Increase in tooth sensitivity (to sweet foods or to hot and cold temperatures)
- Toothache
- Food lodgement between teeth

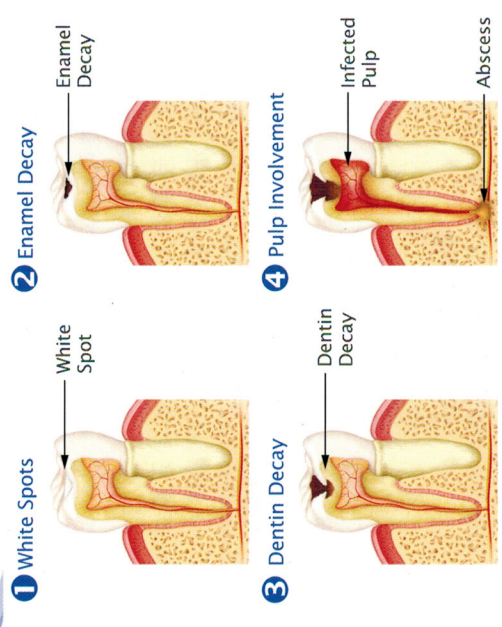
Which areas of the teeth are likely to decay?

There are three different places where a tooth can experience decay.



1. Decay on the biting surfaces of the teeth occurs when plaque becomes trapped in the grooves. This is most common in children because they often miss these areas when brushing.
2. Decay between the teeth occurs when plaque is left to build-up on these hard-to-reach surfaces. These areas cannot be reached by a toothbrush alone and may develop if flossing or cleaning between the teeth is not done regularly.
3. Decay at the root surfaces of the teeth occurs if one has suffered gum recession or bone loss (often associated with gum disease or periodontitis).

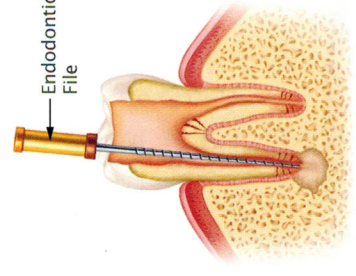
What are the stages of tooth decay?



1. Bacteria that are exposed to sugars or carbohydrates can make acid, which attacks the enamel of the tooth. This process is known as demineralization. The first sign of this is a chalky white spot. At this stage, the decay process can be reversed.
2. Demineralization continues. Enamel starts to break down. Once the enamel surface is broken, the tooth can no longer repair itself. The cavity has to be cleaned and restored by a dentist.
3. The decay reaches into the dentin where it can spread and undermine the enamel.
4. If decay is left untreated, it will reach the tooth's pulp, which contains nerves and blood vessels. The pulp becomes infected. An abscess (swelling) or a fistula (opening to the surface of the gum) can form in the soft tissues.

What is the treatment for dental cavities?

- The standard treatment for cavities is to fill/restore the tooth.
- If the cavity is large with extensive erosion, the remaining tooth may not be able to support the amount of filling material that would be needed to repair it. In this case, the dentist will remove the decay, fill the cavity, and cover the tooth with an artificial crown.
- Sometimes there may be more damage in the interior of the tooth. In these cases, the dentist may refer to a dental specialist called an endodontist for root canal treatment. During this procedure, the nerve and infected pulp are removed and the inside of the tooth is cleaned and sealed. In most cases, the tooth's natural crown will need to be replaced with an artificial crown.



What can be done to prevent tooth decay?

There are several things that can be done to slow down or prevent the breakdown process which leads to cavities. Here are some useful tips:

- Brush twice a day with toothpaste providing round-the-clock protection. **Colgate®** toothpaste is the brand most often recommended by dentists, among which **Colgate Total®** may provide the following benefits:



- ✓ It provides complete 12-hour antibacterial protection
 - ✓ Fights plaque build-up, bad breath and helps prevent caries
- Clean between your teeth daily to remove plaque from areas your toothbrush cannot reach using interdental aids like floss or an interdental toothbrush.
 - Rinse thoroughly, twice daily, after brushing with an anti-cavity dental rinse like **Colgate Plax®** non-alcohol mouthwash.
 - Eat a healthy diet and limit carbohydrate intake.
 - Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral examination.