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I have cavity in my teeth

New babies leave the womb and enter the world with teeth already in place. In about 1 year, 2,000 to 3,000 births, these natal teeth, or fetal teeth, make an appearance [source: MedlinePlus]. They're often removed to spare a nursing mother from discomfort and to prevent the baby choking on them should they fall out. But that isn't the usual progression, of course. Primary teeth, the dentist's name for baby teeth, begin to erupt as early as 3 months along. It's usually the bottom two teeth that crop up first, no surprise to any of us who have seen Facebook photos of babies with gummy smiles. Teething can be rough for both infant and parent. While some families get away with little to no squalling during the teething period, others have a considerably bumpier ride, which is why so many home remedies exist for teething pain, from a cold spoon to chew on, to a chilled washcloth. (Steer away from whiskey on the gums, folks. That's why they make numbing gels for babies nowadays.) Many people seem to think that dental care before the eruption of permanent teeth is a piece of sugar-free cake. That's not the case. As soon as those little chompers appear, they should be cleaned with a baby toothbrush and water. The first visit to the dentist should occur by the third birthday, at the latest, and brushing with toothpaste starts around age 2. Plaque, that lovely bacterial film that coats your teeth, is made of bacteria, and bacteria eat sugars, especially sucrose, or table sugar. So if you don't brush your teeth, plaque builds up, and cavities develop. And cavities are caused by bacteria. Acids in plaque attack the tooth's enamel, burning holes in it that make perfect homes for bacteria. When left untreated, those holes simply grow larger until the whole tooth rots. Baby bottle tooth decay came into the public consciousness in the 1970s, when the media began reporting on research that babies who slept with milk bottles got more cavities than babies who didn't. Since then, the term has been revised to early childhood caries, or ECC. And ECC is an infectious disease. When you were a kid, all you probably understood about cavities is that if you didn't brush and floss, you had a good chance of getting them. You also knew that it would lead to a dentist giving you something called a filling. To understand how a cavity forms, you need to have an understanding of your teeth. Each tooth is covered by a hard mineral substance called enamel. The enamel helps to protect your teeth, but because it's a mineral, it can break down when it makes contact with the acids in your mouth. This is one of many reasons why drinking water is really good for the health of your mouth. It washes over your teeth and gums along with your saliva, helping to combat the acid and buildup of bacteria. Sugars and starches are the main enemies here, because bacteria thrive on them. Once enough bacteria build up, it's going to form into plaque and then tartar, two or more enemies of your enamel. If you fail to take care of your teeth by brushing, flossing and drinking plenty of water, then the tartar and plaque will eventually eat away at the enamel, forming tiny holes that compromise the hard surface. This is what's known as tooth decay. If enough acid builds up over time, these tiny holes get a little larger until they eventually become cavities. Brushing with fluoride toothpaste twice daily, flossing once per day, drinking lots of water and rinsing with an alcohol-free mouthwash are all excellent preventive measures. You can also avoid sugary or starchy foods and, of course, visit your dentist twice a year for regular, professional cleanings. Teeth aren't fingerprints; they aren't inherently unique from birth. When teeth grow in, or erupt, they do so differently in each person. Teeth grow an average of 4 micrometers per day, so it's possible to give a rough age estimate based on teeth. It can also be possible to distinguish ethnicity from the teeth. Some Asians and Native Americans have incisors with scooped-out backs. The most common type of tooth is the premolar, followed by the molar, then the canine, or cusp. There are four types of incisors and two upper lateral incisors. Therefore, each individual tooth needs its own designation. There are dozens of methods for labeling teeth in use, but the three most popular methods are the Universal System, the Palmer Method and the FDI (Fédération Dentaire Internationale) World Dental Federation notation. In the United States, most dentists use the Universal System. In this system, each of the 32 adult teeth is assigned a number. Number one is the upper right third molar, while number 32 is the lower right third molar. The 20 deciduous, or baby teeth, are designated by the letters A through K or the number-letter combination of 1d through 20d. Some teeth, like molars, have multiple surfaces too. Each of these surfaces has a name. The center of the tooth is the biting surface, known as the occlusal. This surface has two elements: the cusps, or raised parts, and the grooves, or indentations. The mesial surface of the tooth is toward the front of the mouth, while the distal is toward the back. The side toward the inside of the mouth is the palatal surface on the upper jaw (lingual on the lower jaw). The tooth surface facing the cheek is the buccal. So if you get a filling on the distal of number 15, you'll know that means it's on the surface facing the back of the mouth on your upper second molar (or 12-year molar). When you visit the dentist for a checkup, he or she uses a Universal System chart and makes a notation on each tooth to show variations such as chips and dental work such as fillings, crowns and bridges. The dentist also includes observations about the health of your teeth, like receding gums or signs of periodontal disease. Most dental visits involve taking sets of X-rays, which can also show work not easily seen, like root canals. In the next section, we'll look at how forensic dentists use these records to identify teeth. This material must not be used for commercial purposes, or in any hospital or medical facility. Failure to comply may result in legal action. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: What are dental cavities? Dental cavities, also called caries, are holes in your teeth caused by bacteria. Bacteria feed on sugars and produce acids that eat away at the enamel, creating cavities. Cavities can be prevented by brushing and flossing regularly, eating a healthy diet low in sugar, and visiting your dentist for regular checkups. How can I tell if I have a cavity? Cavities may cause tooth pain, sensitivity to hot and cold, or visible holes in the tooth. Your dentist can examine your teeth and take X-rays to confirm a cavity. What are the symptoms of dental cavities? Symptoms include toothache, sensitivity to hot and cold, visible holes, and bleeding or swelling of the gum tissue. How can I prevent dental cavities? Prevent dental cavities by brushing and flossing twice a day, eating a healthy diet low in sugar, and visiting your dentist for regular checkups. What are the treatments for dental cavities? Treatments range from fillings to root canals, depending on the severity of the cavity. Fillings are used to restore the tooth after a small cavity has formed. Root canals are performed when the infection has reached the pulp of the tooth.

Your tooth pain gets worse. You have questions or concerns about your condition or care. Care Agreement You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss treatment options with your healthcare providers to decide what care you want to receive. You always have the right to refuse treatment. The above information is an educational aid only. It is not intended as medical advice for individual conditions or treatments. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before following any medical regimen to see if it is safe and effective for you. © Copyright IBM Corporation 2021 Information is for End User's use only and may not be sold, transferred, copied, reproduced, distributed, or otherwise used for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared. IBM, the IBM logo, and "Think Different" are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission from IBM. The information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances. Medical Disclaimer Written by Verena Tan, RD, PhD - Updated on April 6, 2017H's common knowledge that sugar is bad for your teeth, but it wasn't always so. In fact, when the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle first observed that sweet foods like soft figs caused tooth decay, nobody believed him. But as science has progressed, one thing is certain – sugar causes tooth decay. That said, sugar on its own is not the culprit. Rather, the chain of events that takes place afterward is to blame. This article takes a detailed look at how sugar affects your teeth and how you can prevent tooth decay. Many different types of bacteria live in your mouth. Some are beneficial to your dental health, but others are harmful. For example, studies have shown that a select group of harmful bacteria produce acid in your mouth whenever they encounter and digest sugar (1). These acids remove minerals from the tooth enamel, which is the shiny, protective, outer layer of your teeth. This process is called demineralization. The good news is that your saliva helps to constantly reverse this damage in a natural process called remineralization. The minerals in your saliva, such as calcium and phosphate, in addition to fluoride from toothpaste and water, help the enamel repair itself by replacing minerals lost during an "acid attack." This helps strengthen your teeth. However, the repeated cycle of acid attacks causes mineral loss in the enamel. Over time, this weakens and destroys the enamel, forming a cavity. Simply put, a cavity is a hole in the tooth caused by tooth decay. It's the result of harmful bacteria digesting the sugar in foods and producing acids. If left untreated, the cavity can spread into the deeper layers of the tooth, causing pain and possible tooth loss. The signs of tooth decay include a toothache, pain when chewing and sensitivity to sweet, hot or cold foods and drinks. Summary: Your mouth is a constant battleground of demineralization and remineralization. Nonetheless, cavities occur when bacteria in your mouth produce acids that eat away at the enamel, creating cavities. Cavities can be prevented by brushing and flossing regularly, eating a healthy diet low in sugar, and visiting your dentist for regular checkups. How can I tell if I have a cavity? Cavities may cause tooth pain, sensitivity to hot and cold, or visible holes in the tooth. Your dentist can examine your teeth and take X-rays to confirm a cavity. What are the symptoms of dental cavities? Symptoms include toothache, sensitivity to hot and cold, visible holes, and bleeding or swelling of the gum tissue. How can I prevent dental cavities? Prevent dental cavities by brushing and flossing twice a day, eating a healthy diet low in sugar, and visiting your dentist for regular checkups. What are the treatments for dental cavities? Treatments range from fillings to root canals, depending on the severity of the cavity. Fillings are used to restore the tooth after a small cavity has formed. Root canals are performed when the infection has reached the pulp of the tooth.

The pH scale measures how acidic or basic a solution is, with 7 being neutral. When the pH of plaque drops below normal, or less than 5.5, the acidity start to dissolve minerals and destroy the tooth's enamel (3, 4). If the process, small holes or erosions will form. Over time, they will become larger, until one large hole or cavity appears. Summary: Sugar attracts harmful bacteria that destroy the tooth's enamel, which can cause a cavity in the affected tooth. In recent years, researchers have found that certain food habits matter when it comes to the formation of cavities. Consuming High-Sugar Snacks Think before you reach for that sugary snack. Many studies have found that the frequent consumption of sweets and sugary drinks leads to cavities (2, 5, 6). Frequent snacking on foods high in sugar increases the amount of time your teeth are exposed to the dissolving effects of various acids, causing tooth decay. One recent study among school children found that those who snacked on cookies and potato chips were four times more likely to develop cavities than children who did not (7). Drinking Sugary and Acidic Beverages The most common source of liquid sugar is sugary soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks and juices. In addition to sugar, these drinks have high levels of acids that can cause tooth decay. In a large study in Finland, drinking 1–2 sugary-sweetened beverages a day was linked to a 31% higher risk of cavities (8). Also, an Australian study in children aged 5–16 found that the number of sugar-sweetened drinks consumed was directly correlated to the number of cavities found (9). What's more, one study involving more than 20,000 adults showed that just one occasional sugary drink resulted in a 44% increase in the risk of losing 1–5 teeth, compared to those who did not drink any sugary drinks (10). This means that drinking a sugary drink more than twice daily nearly triples your risk of losing more than six teeth. Fourthly, one study found that reducing your sugar intake to less than 10% of daily calories decreases your risk of tooth decay (11). Sipping on Sugary Beverages If you constantly sip sugary drinks throughout the day, it's time to rethink that habit. Research has shown that the way you drink your beverages affects your risk of developing cavities. One study showed that sipping on sugary drinks over a long period of time increased the risk of tooth decay (12). Other studies have found that sucking on candy or lollipops increases the risk of tooth decay (13). Sticky Foods Stickiness is a key factor that provides long-lasting sources of sugar, such hard candies, breath mints and lollipops. These are also linked to tooth decay. Because you retain these foods in your mouth for longer, their sugars are gradually released. This gives the harmful bacteria in your mouth plenty of time to digest the sugar and produce more acid. The end result is prolonged periods of demineralization and shortened periods of remineralization (3). Even processed, starchy foods such as potato chips, tortilla chips and flavored crackers may linger in your mouth and cause cavities (12, 13). Summary: Certain habits are linked to tooth decay, including snacking on high-sugar foods, drinking sugary or acidic beverages, sipping on sweet drinks and eating sticky foods. Research has found that other factors can hasten or slow the development of cavities, as well. These include saliva, eating habits, exposure to fluoride, oral hygiene and overall diet (3, 4). Below are some ways you can fight tooth decay. Watch What You Eat and Drink Make sure to eat a balanced diet rich in whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy products. If you do eat sugary foods and sweetened or acidic beverages, have them with your meals, instead of between them. Also, consider using a straw when drinking sugary and acidic beverages. This will give your teeth less exposure to the sugar and acid in the drinks. Furthermore, add raw fruits or vegetables to your meals to increase the flow of saliva in your mouth. Finally, do not allow infants to sleep with bottles containing sweetened liquids, fruit juices or formula milk. Cut Down on Sugary/Sugary and Sticky Foods Only be eaten occasionally. If you do indulge in sweet treats, drink some water to help rinse off the sugar. Preferably tap water that contains fluoride — to help rinse out your mouth and dilute the sugar that sticks to the tooth surface. Moreover, only drink soft drinks in moderation, if at all. If you do drink them, don't sip them slowly over a long period of time. This exposes your teeth to sugar and acid attacks for longer. Instead, drink water. It contains no sugar and helps to flush out the acids. Lastly, keep your mouth hydrated. Drinking at least eight glasses of water a day keeps your mouth moist and helps to dilute the acids that stick to the tooth surface. Chew Gum Chewing stimulates saliva flow helps bath the teeth in beneficial minerals. Chewing sugar-free gum may also prevent plaque build-up by stimulating saliva production and remineralization. Lastly, nothing ensures keeping your teeth and gums healthy like visiting your dentist every six months. Summary: Besides watching your sugar intake, try to eat a healthy, balanced diet, take good care of your teeth and visit your dentist regularly in order to prevent tooth decay. Whenever you eat or drink anything sugary, the bacteria inside your mouth work to break it down. However, they produce acid in the process. Acid destroys the tooth enamel, which results in tooth decay over time. To fight this, keep your intake of high-sugar foods and beverages to a minimum — especially between meals and right before bedtime. Taking good care of your teeth and practicing a healthy lifestyle are the best ways to win the battle against tooth decay.

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