

TOOTH DECAY (CAVITIES/CARIES)

What is Tooth Decay?

Tooth decay is a destruction of the tooth enamel. It occurs when foods containing carbohydrates (sugars and starches) such as milk, pop, raisins, cakes or candy are frequently left on the teeth. Bacteria that live in the mouth thrive on these foods, producing acids as a result. Over a period of time, these acids destroy tooth enamel, resulting in tooth decay.

How Do I Prevent Tooth Decay?

You can help prevent tooth decay by following these tips:

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth daily with floss or interdental cleaner.
- Eat nutritious and balanced meals and limit snacking.
- Check with your dentist about use of supplemental fluoride, which strengthens your teeth, and about use of dental sealants (a plastic protective coating) applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth to protect them from decay.
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral examination.

Aren't Cavities Just Kid's Stuff?

No. Changes that occur with aging make cavities an adult problem, too. Recession of the gums away from the teeth, combined with an increased incidence of gum disease, can expose tooth roots to plaque

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Source: American Dental Association

**For dentists and specialists in your area, use our
"Find-A-Dentist" feature at www.multnomahdental.org**

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