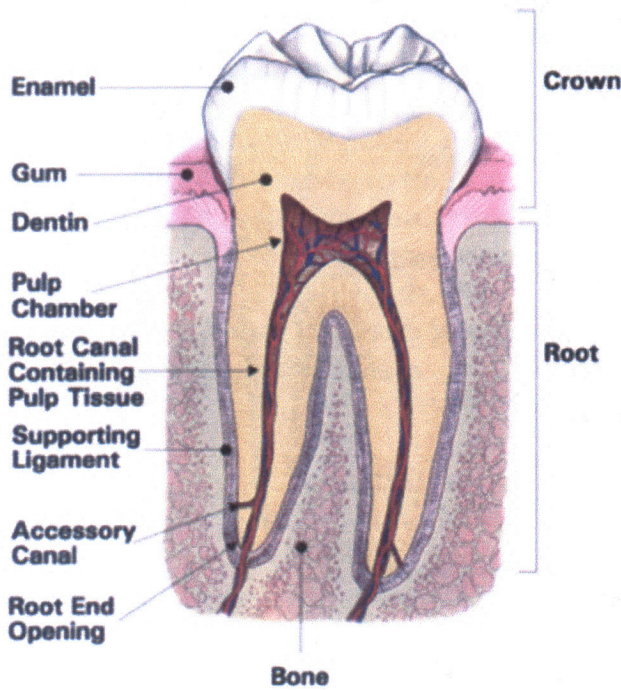


Preventing Tooth Decay



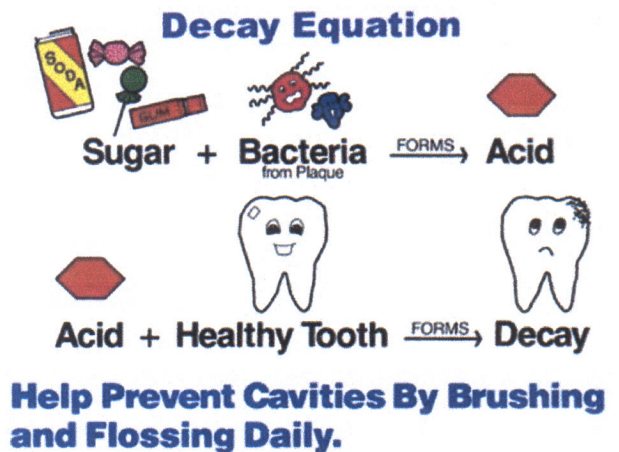
Tooth decay, or dental caries ('cavities') is caused by acid. This acid is produced when cavity causing bacteria come into contact with sugar. Bacteria, sugar, and acid adhere to tooth surfaces in a mixture known as dental plaque. Prolonged contact of the plaque with tooth enamel results in decay. Once decay has penetrated the hard, outer (enamel) layer of a tooth, it spreads rapidly through the underlying (dentin) layer to the pulp (nerve). Toothaches can result once decay extends into dentin. If decay producing bacteria invade the pulp, they spread through the roots and into the supporting bone, producing an abscess. Left untreated, a more generalized infection may develop.

Dental caries is preventable. Fight the Decay Equation! Decay can be prevented if:

1. Dental plaque is regularly removed
2. Sugar intake is controlled, and
3. Tooth enamel is made more resistant to decay.

A. BRUSH OFF THAT PLAQUE!

DENTAL PLAQUE must be completely removed from all tooth surfaces at least once every 24 hours. Brushing twice a day is even better. If food is not removed, it can lead to development of plaque. The last thing one should be doing before going to bed is brushing one's teeth - No after brushing snack, pizza, milk or sugary drink should be given.



Plaque removal is carried out with both floss and toothbrush. Thorough brushing of teeth takes at least 2 minutes. Preschool children must be closely supervised. To clean all surfaces of a preschooler's teeth adequately, parents should stand behind the child, with the child facing away, and with the back of their head resting against the parent's body.