

The good news is tooth
decay can be prevented!
Did you know that fluoride
toothpaste has cut in half
decay rates since it was
introduced? A high sugar
diet and poor brushing
causes tooth decay. Aim to
keep your teeth for life!

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Family Dental Care

**How to prevent
tooth decay**

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay starts as minor damage to the surface of teeth which look first white then brown. This often worsens to the stage of becoming holes in teeth.

Decay is caused when bugs on our teeth (in that sticky layer or film called plaque) use the sugars in foods and drinks and turn these sugars into acids which dissolve the surface of the teeth.

The more often that we eat or drink sugary things, the more often acid is produced and the more damage is caused to our teeth.

To prevent tooth decay we recommend you:

- avoid eating or drinking sugar between meals.
- clean the teeth by brushing and in-between cleaning to remove the bacteria that cause problems.
- use a fluoride toothpaste to make the teeth stronger and less likely to be destroyed by the bacteria and sugars.
- limit your intake of foods and drinks with added sugars to a maximum of 4 times per day

- Make sure sugars provide less than 10% of total energy in the diet or less than 60 g per person per day.
- whole fruit will not decay the teeth

Where are sugars found?

Most sugars in the diet are contained in processed and manufactured foods and drinks. These include:

- sugar and chocolate confectionery
- cakes and biscuits
- buns, pastries, fruit pies
- sponge puddings and other puddings
- table sugar
- sugared breakfast cereals
- jams, preserves, honey
- ice cream
- fruit in syrup
- fresh fruit juices
- sugared soft drinks
- sugared, milk-based beverages
- sugar-containing alcoholic drinks
- dried fruits
- syrups and sweet sauces.

It is important to recognise that honey, fresh fruit juice and dried fruit all contain sugars that can cause tooth decay.

General facts for eating well

The two most important elements of a healthy diet are:

- eating the right amount of food relative to how active you are.
- eating a range of foods for a healthy balanced diet. Include foods from all the major food groups. Lots of fruit and vegetables; starchy staple foods such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals; some protein-rich foods such as lean meat, fish, eggs and lentils; and some dairy foods, preferably of the lower fat variety.
- base meals on starchy foods
- eat lots of fruit and veg (fruit is acidic and can damage the teeth if taken too frequently, try neutralising the effect with cheese or milk afterwards)
- eat more fish
- cut down on saturated fat and sugar
- drink plenty of water

For more info see www.eatwell.gov.uk