What Is Really Dental Caries

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Dental caries is one of the most common of all disorders. It usually occurs in children and young adults but can affect any person. It is a common cause of tooth loss in younger people.

Dental caries is a demineralization of the tooth enamel (surface) caused by bacteria. Dental caries is the medical term for tooth decay or cavities. It is caused by acid erosion of tooth enamel.

"Caries" is Latin for "rot" or "rotten". Rot happens in wood and other materials. In medieval Europe the word became used in medicine to describe rot in bones (which we would now call osteomyelitis) and rot in teeth. "Rotten teeth" are the signs of a tooth disease which is called "dental caries" or "tooth decay". In medicine and dentistry an individual area of rot in a tooth is called "a carious lesion". A rotten tooth is called "a carious tooth".

Bacteria are normally present in the mouth. Many different types of bacteria normally live in the human mouth. The bacteria convert all foods — especially sugar and starch — into acids. They build up on the teeth (along with saliva, bits of food and other natural substances) in a sticky film called plaque.

Dental Caries Symptoms

Early caries may not have any symptoms. Later, when the decay has eaten through the enamel, the teeth may be sensitive to sweet foods or to hot and cold temperatures.

Dental Caries Treatment

The standard treatment for a cavity is to fill the tooth. First, the dentist will numb the area. Then the decayed material in the cavity is removed and the cavity is filled. Fillings usually are made of dental amalgam or composite resin. Amalgam is a silver-gray material made from silver alloyed with copper or other metals to make it more durable. Composite resin offers a better appearance because it is tooth-colored.

Dental Caries Prevention

Dental caries is a disease that usually can be successfully prevented or controlled. It is an important task for the dental team to teach individuals to take correct actions to minimise the risk for the disease. It is also possible to identify and evaluate factors of importance for cavity formation. By targeted actions, such risk factors can usually be changed, resulting in a reduced risk for caries.

You can prevent cavities by reducing the amount of plaque and bacteria in your mouth. The best way to do this is by daily brushing and flossing daily and getting professional dental cleanings twice a year. You also can reduce the amount of acid in your mouth by eating sugary or starchy foods less often during the day.