

# Cavity Prevention

If Dr. Bertolini has given this to you to read, most likely you or a family member has a problem with tooth decay (cavities). You or your family member may have numerous large areas of decay, may have decay occurring under existing dental restorations (such as fillings or crowns), or there may be very small cavities just starting between the teeth that we are trying to stop from getting bigger. Or we may just want to PREVENT you from ever getting cavities.



There are almost 650 types of bacteria that can be found in our mouths. At any one time, there are about 350 types present in our mouth. Of all these types of bacteria, there is only ONE that actively causes tooth decay – *Streptococcus mutans*. When you eat a food with ANY sugar in it (even very small amounts of sugar cause problems), the *S. mutans* bacteria also eat sugar. When these bacteria eat sugar, their waste product given off is lactic acid. You know what acid does don't you? That's right, given time it can eat holes in your teeth. No *S. mutans* = no tooth decay.

If you were to have no tooth decay, you would probably still have *S. mutans* in your mouth, but it would be found in very low numbers. But if you do have tooth decay, the cavities act as *S. mutans* bacteria hatcheries, and your mouth becomes LOADED with high numbers of *S. mutans*. Our job is to get rid of the tooth decay (unless you only have small cavities between your teeth that we are trying to stop), your job is to lower the number of *S. mutans* bacteria in your mouth. If the numbers stay high, you will just form new cavities, as fast as we can fix them and the small cavities will continue to grow.

## Lowering the numbers of *Streptococcus mutans* in your mouth:

- 1) Brush well, at least twice a day. This means using a good brush (a POH toothbrush, a Butler GUM full angle soft brush or a Rota-dent electric. If we haven't done so yet, we'll be telling you how to properly use your brush and you can also go to our website to view videos about proper brushing technique [http://www.northcantonsmiles.com/How\\_To\\_Brush.html](http://www.northcantonsmiles.com/How_To_Brush.html).
- 2) Floss well with Butler EZ Thru or Oral-B GUM Expanding at least once a day (twice a day is better). *For those of you who have cosmetic work, it is better to use POH floss.*
- 3) Reduce the FREQUENCY of sweets. For instance, sucking a Tic Tacs several times a day will 'kill' your teeth.
- 4) Rinse with a fluoride rinse for 60 seconds twice a day (not for children age 5 or younger). One of these rinses should be **immediately before sleep**. Do not rinse with water, eat or drink for at least 30 minutes after rinsing with a fluoride rinse. We want the fluoride to continue working even after you spit it out. Children may use ACT REACH fluoride rinse in flavors mint, cinnamon, and bubblegum. Adults would be better using SPRY Xylitol Mouth Rinse. It is a natural anti-plaque product, which we are finding, has the same effects as fluoride mouth rinses. For adults who have heavy staining, due to coffee and tobacco, we recommend using Rembrandt Age Defying Mouthrinse, because in addition to fluoride, it helps keep the gums healthy (although adults may use the ACT if they'd like – even the bubblegum ACT FOR KIDS).
- 5) Chew xylitol gum. You need to eat or chew xylitol products at least five times throughout each day. You may use xylitol gum, xylitol mints, and xylitol also comes granulated just like regular sugar, to be used in place of regular granulated sugar. Have the active areas of decay removed
- 6) Seal off the tiny natural pits where bacteria hide and start cavities, and replace defective fillings/crown that allow bacteria to seep under and cause decay (that's also our job). If these pits are slightly deeper we will do a Preventive Resin Restoration (PRR). This is generally done without anesthesia and is appropriate for areas deeper than a sealant can take care of.

Brushing and flossing will lower the numbers of Streptococcus mutans by physically removing them. Reducing the FREQUENCY of sugar intake reduces the number of times per day that acids are produced by bacteria. Fluoride rinses help make the teeth stronger against the acids produced by S. mutans. And xylitol gum actually helps kill bacteria.

There are many types of natural sugars. There is glucose found in honey, lactose found in milk, fructose found in fruits, and sucrose (table sugar) found in sweets and other foods. It's the sucrose (sometimes listed as corn syrup) that causes the problems. Xylitol is also a natural type of sugar found in some fruits, berries, and vegetables. When S. Mutans eat xylitol, it kills many of them. And it injures the other ones so that they cannot produce acid for a few hours. You can see that chewing the xylitol gum can be very beneficial. Not only will it not cause tooth decay, but also it can actually help prevent it.

Please don't think that by chewing Xylitol gum it means you don't have to do the other things above. Xylitol is not a 'magic bullet', but it is useful in the fight against tooth decay.

Closely follow the instructions above and you will have much success in preventing new cavities. You'll also be amazed at how much better your mouth will feel.

Call us with any questions 330-494-6305.