

TOOTH DECAY

What is Tooth Decay?

Tooth decay occurs when the surface of the tooth is broken down by acid released from bacteria in the mouth. It causes the tooth surface to become discoloured and softened, eventually breaking down the enamel.



What causes Tooth Decay?

Two things cause tooth decay

1. Sugar – when sugar is consumed, bacteria in the mouth utilise the sugar to release acid. It is this acid which dissolves the tooth surface.
2. Poor tooth brushing – plaque left on the teeth from food or drink harbours bacteria, which then feed on the sugar eaten, producing the damaging acid.



Can my Child get Tooth Decay?

YES! Children's teeth are more susceptible to damage from sugar and therefore more care must be taken with diet and tooth brushing.

What Symptoms Might I Get?

Sometimes no symptoms are felt with tooth decay, and the only way you will be aware of a problem is, if you attend your Dentist on a regular basis.

Most of the time the symptoms you feel will be sensitivity to cold drinks and air, sweet foods and sometimes hot foods.

Why do I Need to Prevent Tooth Decay?

If decay is left untreated, the tooth can be so badly damaged that it becomes infected. This may cause severe pain and can lead to the formation of an abscess or swollen face. Early areas of tooth decay can be treated with a fluoride application, which is absorbed by the tooth surface to help it remineralise or repair. Often when you have a deeper area of decay in a tooth, the most appropriate treatment will be a simple filling. The dentist removes the affected part of the tooth and repairs the cavity with a filling material. If the tooth requires further treatment then your Dentist will

advise. If a tooth becomes badly affected by decay, sometimes the only available treatment option is to remove the tooth.



What can I do to reduce my risk of tooth decay?

1. Brush your teeth x2 daily with fluoride toothpaste, and use either floss or mini tepe brushes to clean in between the teeth every night.
2. Reduce your sugar intake and the frequency of consumption. Keep sweet things to enjoy as a dessert or treat. Your teeth can cope with 5 attacks from any kind of food or drink within a day. Any more and there is a higher risk of decay.
3. Visit your Dentist regularly.