



All children are born with no bacteria in the mouth. As they grow intraoral bacteria is introduced by the parents and by the things that are placed in the mouth. The dental health of the parents has a direct correlation with the dental health of the child.

Intraoral bacteria create plaque within 20 minutes of carbohydrates introduced through food or drink. The plaque matrix is formed on the tooth structure and is from bacterial by-products and is acidic in nature. If plaque is left on the tooth structure it eventually will demineralize the enamel of the tooth and cause a cavity.

To aid in preventing tooth decay we recommend the following:

- 1) Removing the plaque matrix from the mouth through effective oral hygiene methods. Brushing and flossing on a regular basis with parental supervision. Children do not have good motor dexterity until approximately 10 years of age and need parents help to be completely effective in removal of plaque.**
- 2) Limiting refined sugar and foods high in acid in the diet. All foods contain carbohydrates in some form which the oral bacteria live on. It is not only the amount of candy or sweets your children eat. Fruit drinks and soda pops, diet or regular, are high in acid as well as sugar. Potato chips and tortilla chips are also foods high in acid. Limiting the frequency of how often food and drink are consumed is also helpful in reducing the plaque acids in the mouth. If your child is to have sweets it is best to do it at mealtime instead of snack time. Good snacks that a low in acid production are: cheese, apples, popcorn, pretzels.**
- 3) Introducing Fluoride orally. Fluoride inhibits the demineralization of the tooth surface and actually hardens the outer surface of enamel. Topical fluoride must be used daily to be effective. It is found in toothpaste and fluoride rinses such as ACT and PHOSFLUR. The fluoride rinses should be swished for twenty seconds and spit out. To keep fluoride actively working on the teeth while sleeping, it's best not to drink or eat after its use.**
- 4) Chewing sugarless chewing gum after meals for 15-20 minutes helps reduce cavities by reducing plaque acids in the mouth, stimulating saliva flow, and mechanically cleansing the mouth of oral debris. Sugarless chewing gum with Xylitol inhibits the growth of oral microflora. Studies have shown that parents who also chew sugarless chewing gum 3 to 4 times daily after meals has a positive effect on their children's dental caries rate.**

