

# Eggert Family Dentistry

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## Preventing Cavities

### What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay, a disease known as caries or cavities, starts with the destruction of the tooth enamel. The bacteria in your mouth feed on sugar and starch and produce an acid that destroys the tooth enamel, resulting in tooth decay.

### What increases your risk?

*Poor Diet* – Sugary and starchy foods or drinks contribute to decay. This includes the obviously sugary foods like pop, candy, cake, and cookies. But, this also includes things less obvious like bread, crackers, and breakfast cereals. Even diet or “no sugar” drinks are often high in acid, a contributing factor in decay.

*Frequent Snacking and Sipping* – Continuous snacking and sipping doesn’t give the mouth a chance to restore itself to a balanced and neutral pH. This gives the cavity-causing bacteria fertile ground.

*Oral Hygiene* – If you don't clean your teeth after eating and drinking, plaque, which is a combination of the cavity causing bacteria and food particles, builds up and erodes away your teeth.

*Weak and Rough Fillings* – Over time, dental fillings can become weak and begin to breakdown, or the edges can become rough. Either of these situations allows the plaque to build up more easily on the tooth. This also makes it more difficult to completely remove the plaque.

*Bottled Water* - Adding fluoride to public water supplies has helped decrease tooth decay by offering protective minerals for tooth enamel. Many people drink bottled or filtered water that doesn't contain fluoride, causing them to miss out on the protective benefits of fluoride.

*Age* - Over time, teeth can wear down and the gums may recede, making teeth more vulnerable to tooth decay and cavities. Also dry mouth increases with age, giving the bacteria more of a chance to erode the teeth because the saliva can’t keep them in check.

### What can you do?

- Eat a balanced diet and limit between meal snacking
- Drink soft drinks in moderation and remember a can of soda finished with a meal is better than a can of soda finished over a long period of time
- Use fluoridated toothpaste
- Brush at least twice a day to remove all the plaque
- Floss daily
- Visit us regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams
- Consider getting dental sealants, which are a protective plastic coating applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth where decay often starts

Tooth decay is a preventable disease, please call our office if you would like more information on the risks and prevention of cavities. We also offer a free cavity risk assessment, let us know if you would like to participate.