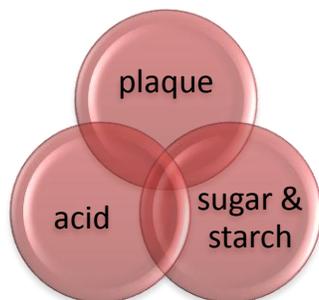


# Acid Attack

## controlling cavities and erosion



### Plaque and Acid

Plaque is a sticky, thin layer of bacteria on teeth. Whenever we eat or drink something that contains **sugar or starch**, the bacteria thrive and produce **acids**. If these acids are left on the teeth, they can eventually cause a breakdown of the tooth enamel resulting in a 'hole' or cavity. This process is called **tooth decay**.

When teeth are **constantly bathed** in acids, like from acidic drinks such as soft drinks, from other foods or drinks or from gastric reflux, the enamel can also be eroded away, without necessarily becoming decayed.

### Brushing and Flossing

There are many ways to decrease the chance of harmful acids damaging our teeth. One way is with good home dental care. Effectively brushing twice a day, especially before bed and flossing daily will remove the plaque from around the teeth, gums and in between teeth.



Decay forming in between teeth

Sometimes it can be hard to see plaque. You can run your tongue along the teeth and if they feel 'furry' then plaque is present. You may also use a special disclosing gel or tablet which will stain the

### Diet and Acid Attacks

Foods and drinks that are high in sugar, starch and acid can cause decay in teeth and erode enamel. It's important to remember that even some 'natural' foods and drinks can cause damage to teeth as well.

### Acidic Food and Drinks

- Apples, tomatoes, lemons, oranges, pineapples, pears, plums, peaches
- Soft drinks (regular, diet and sugar free), cordial, sports and energy drinks, wine, fruit drinks and fruit juices
- Salad dressings and pickled vegetables

### Saliva

- Saliva is used by the mouth for many reasons but its ability to **neutralise acids** can help to decrease the chance of tooth decay and erosion.
- Saliva helps to wash away plaque and food debris, can **repair** microscopic decay and contains fluoride that has been absorbed by the body.
- Saliva needs time to do its work on teeth, so by keeping snacks and meals down to a minimum (3 meals and 2 snacks) through the day, saliva has more of a chance to work.

### More Tips

- ✓ Drink plenty of fluoridated water
- ✓ Avoid drinks high in acids such as soft drinks and fruit juices
- ✓ Chew **sugar free gum** after meals (increases saliva flow)
- ✓ Snack on teeth-friendly foods like cheese, nuts, unsalted pop corn or vegetables.
- ✓ Rinse with a solution of water and 1 teaspoon baking soda to neutralise acids after consuming acidic foods or drinks or vomiting
- ✓ After consuming acidic foods or drinks, wait 30 minutes before brushing teeth that may be 'soft' after an acid-attack.



### Low-Acid Food and Drinks

Bananas, mangoes, melon, paw paws, vegetables  
Soups, pasta  
Milk, soda water, flat spring water  
Dairy foods, eggs  
Meat, poultry, seafood



Decay and erosion