

What Does Tooth Decay Look and Feel Like?

Tooth decay, or cavities, is a common condition. Bacteria in your mouth “eat” sugar from your foods and drinks and create acid. This acid causes your teeth to break down. This is when cavities happen.

Some people are more at risk for tooth decay than others. If you eat a lot of sweets, carbohydrates, and sugar, you are more likely to have tooth decay (your mom was right!). People with poor oral hygiene, people with reduced saliva, and people who do not have access to water with fluoride in it (e.g., people who drink well water) are also at higher risk. Finally, kids and older people have higher rates of tooth decay.



Symptoms of tooth decay include white spots on the teeth that turn into brown spots that gradually become darker. Sensitivity to hot, cold, or sweet foods is another symptom. Bad breath, difficulty biting, and pain are others. Don't ignore these symptoms! Cavities won't go away by themselves—you need the help of a dentist.



The good news is that cavities can be prevented. Brush your teeth (or your child's teeth) with fluoride toothpaste two times every day for two minutes. Floss daily and don't eat too much sugar. And, be sure to visit your dentist for regular checkups. If you need help finding a dentist, call PrimeWest Health Member Services and we will help you find one.

Sources: American Dental Association (ADA), Johns Hopkins Medicine

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