



**Grayhawk Prosthodontics - Farzam Maleki, B.D.S., M.S., F.A.C.P.  
(480) 538-5270**

**Tooth Decay/Caries (Cavities)**

Caries is a disease of mineralized tissues of the teeth. It is caused by bacteria living in our mouths, using fermentable carbohydrates in our diet. Tooth decay can spread deep within the tooth leading to pain and infection and eventually loss of tooth. Teeth with crowns (or caps) can still become decayed starting from around their margins.

In order for tooth decay/cavities to form the following conditions are needed:

- **Microorganisms** (Bacteria) - *these live in everyone's mouth.*
- **Plaque** - a biofilm that *forms on teeth after eating.*
- **Fermentable Carbohydrates** - *food & drinks containing sugars & carbohydrates.*
- **Susceptible tooth surface** - *rough surfaces or grooves but potentially all surfaces.*

Who is **more likely** to have tooth decay?

- People with poor oral hygiene, leaving plaque on teeth
- Frequent consumption of *fermentable carbohydrates e.g. soda, sugary sports drinks, cookies, cakes, candies, snack bars, brownies.*
- Those with dry mouth or reduced salivary flow
- Poor fitting restorations where plaque can accumulate

What can you do to **reduce the risk of tooth decay** and costly treatment?

- Brushing after every meal. Flossing daily. Meticulous oral hygiene is a must!
- Reduce dietary intake of fermentable carbohydrates (*Diet analysis: write down everything you eat & drink for three days-this will help you find the worst culprits.*)
- Reduce **frequency** of cavity causing food & drinks. e.g.: *Sipping on a can of soda all day is worse than drinking it all in a short time.*
- Keep your mouth moist/hydrated at all times.
- Chew sugar free gum (preferably those with **Xylitol**) after each meal for 20-30 minutes. *Xylitol has been shown to reduce caries.*
- Use fluoride containing toothpastes and mouthwashes
- Daily use of fluoride gel in custom trays for those especially at risk or with history of recurrent decay.