

## What is tooth decay?

Dental caries, or tooth decay, is the formation of cavities in the teeth by the action of bacteria. The causes of caries are:

**Plaque bacteria**

**Dietary Sugars**

**Exposure to acid attack**

**Susceptible tooth surfaces**

Tooth decay occurs when bacteria in plaque reacts with dietary sugars to produce acid. The production of acid by the bacteria alters the natural environment of the mouth; this environment becomes more acidic and the enamel becomes more at risk of decay.



Under normal circumstances, minerals in your saliva as well as the fluoride that is contained in toothpaste during regular brushing helps to decrease the risk of decay. However, for various reasons, some individuals may need additional protection. For example, people with exposed dental root surfaces are more sensitive to acid attacks.

## Take action to protect your teeth against tooth decay

Tooth decay can be avoided. This has been proven in anti-cavity prevention and protection programmes in children. However, tooth decay continues to be a major problem and many people remain at risk. Individuals with an increased need for protection against tooth decay are people with:

**Decay in the roots of the teeth, on tooth surfaces or in interdental spaces**



**Previous periodontal disease/receding gum lines**



**Extensive bridgework and crowns**

**Chronic dry mouth**

**Orthodontic appliances**



Whenever there is an increased risk of tooth decay, there is an increased need for protection against it. This includes treatments at the dental practice as well as through your oral hygiene regime at home.

**Your dentist can recommend Colgate products (including fluoride toothpastes and mouthrinses) that will help protect your teeth against decay.**