

# Tooth Disease and Treatment



## Tooth decay is a serious disease!

- Starts on the surface of the teeth and continues to get worse
- Can cause permanent damage in as little as 6 months<sup>1</sup>
- Can cause sensitivity
- Ultimately may mean drilling, fillings and crowns

## What causes tooth decay?

- Not flossing and brushing every day at home
- “Dry mouth” from medicines that reduce saliva flow
- Foods with too much sugar
- Fillings that you already have can wear away
- Braces, retainers and bridges you already have can attract bacteria that causes decay
- Putting infants to bed with drinks containing sugar
- Moms can pass on the bacteria that causes decay to their kids
- Using any form of tobacco

### Stage One Disease: Pre-Cavities

- Your tooth loses minerals on the outer surface
- This is usually invisible to the naked eye
- Areas where teeth touch are really vulnerable

### Stage Two Disease: White Spots

- These are the first visible signs
- They appear near your gum line or near your braces
- Think of them as “hot spots”

### Stage Three Disease: Cavities

#### Regular Cavities

- Part of the healthy tooth is destroyed
- Has to be cleared of decay and filled
- If decay gets too deep, the tooth and root have to be removed and you’ll need a crown, bridge or implant

#### Root Cavities

- Start on the tooth surface near the gums
- Faster growing than regular cavities
- More common in adults
- Can make teeth sensitive and painful when eating or drinking cold or hot beverages

#### Secondary Cavities

- Over time, older fillings can crack or chip
- Plaque and bacteria get under them and cause new decay
- Need to be refilled or replaced with a crown, bridge or implant

## Fight tooth decay with proper care.

- Avoid drilling, filling and tooth loss with early detection
- Learn to remove plaque by brushing properly without damaging enamel
- Your dental professional may recommend using:
  - A power toothbrush
  - A special toothpaste
  - A special oral rinse
- Floss every day to remove plaque between your teeth
- Don’t miss appointments with your dental professional

## You may also need stronger medicines or more frequent visits to the dental office.

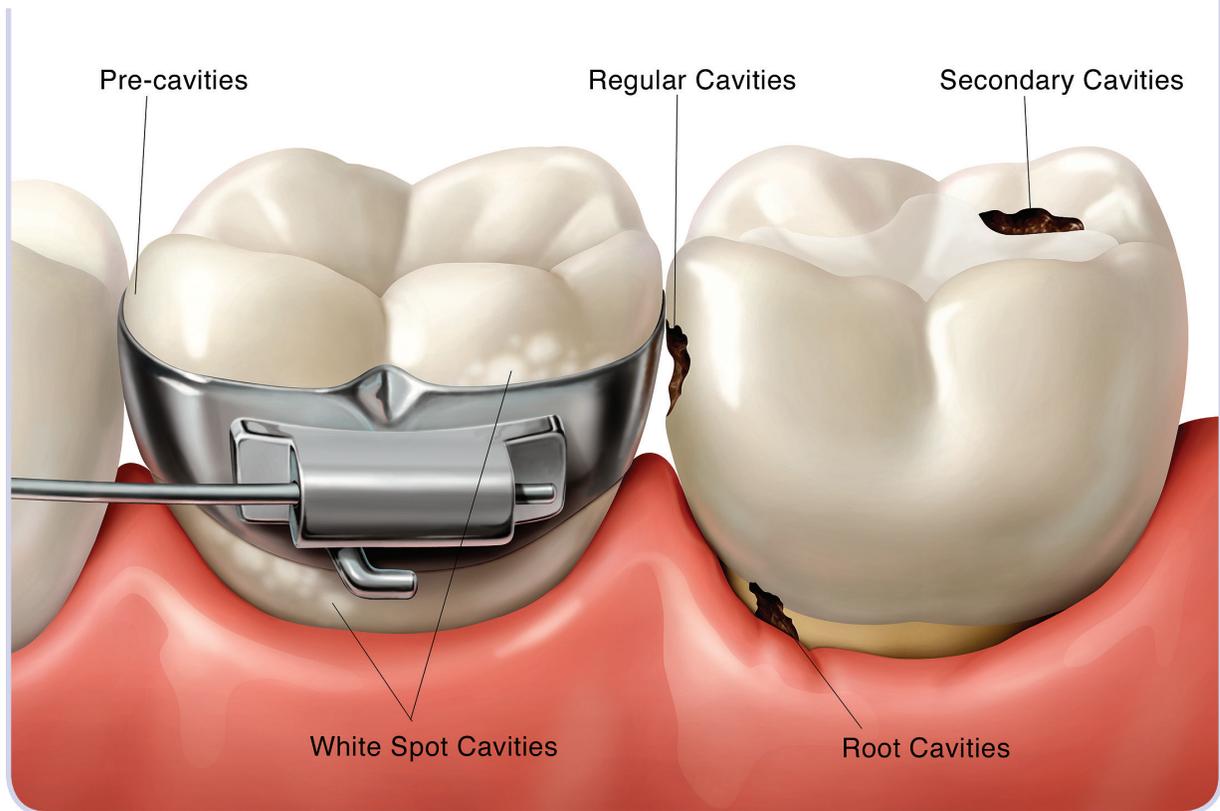
- High-strength fluoride varnishes, gels or rinses applied during your dental office visit can help, even for adults
- Prescription fluoride toothpaste or rinse may need to be used between visits
- Prescription sensitivity toothpaste can be helpful for people with root cavities
- More office visits may be needed to remove plaque and tartar build-up that you are missing at home

1. Diagnosis and Management of Dental Caries Throughout Life.  
National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Conference Statement, March 26-28, 2001.

# Avoid drilling, filling and loss with early detection.



Dental professionals can spot early signs of problems  
and recommend home care treatments.



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