

- **What they are: spots on the enamel that are whiter than normal**
- **What causes them: fluoride or genetics may be the cause, and they can even be a sign of the caries infection**
- **Treatment can be very difficult and sometimes white spots are irreversible**



White spots should be as concerning as brown spots!

A number of factors can lead to the development of white spots on teeth. Sometimes these spots are caused by nutrition, genetics, or an excessive intake of fluoride, while other times they become evident after braces have been removed. Some children also develop white spots on their teeth as they are developing.

Usually white spots that appear on the teeth are actually areas of decalcified enamel and sometimes this problem leads to the deterioration of teeth. Some dentists will tell you that the first evidence of tooth decay is a white spot lesion and by this description they mean that the tooth's enamel has taken on an opaque colour in the area where the cavity is beginning to form.

White spots on the teeth can appear after changes have occurred in the mineral content of a person's teeth (which often happens in childhood and leads to eventual deterioration of enamel if left untreated).

White spots can also appear in connection with a condition called fluorosis, which is the result of having an excessive intake of fluoride. People who live in areas where drinking water contains a high fluoride level often encounter this problem. As we mentioned, white spot lesions are also commonly attributed to having braces.

People with orthodontic braces often have trouble properly brushing their teeth and the result is a build-up of plaque. The acids in plaque can severely harm tooth enamel and eventually cause cavities. The first evidence of this type of tooth decay is the white decalcified enamel spot or lesion that becomes apparent when braces are removed.

White spots (or unsightly areas where enamel has become decalcified) can be extremely bothersome when braces are removed because usually the part of the tooth that has remained underneath the orthodontic bracket will remain protected from plaque, while bacteria continues to attack the area surrounding the brackets. This means that when braces are removed the teeth will appear stained by the brackets and small, square, discoloured outlines will remain on teeth, and may be difficult to treat.

Treatment options for white spots on teeth can include fluoride treatment, bonding and porcelain laminate placement depending on the severity of the problem.

Most people do not realize that sometimes having bright, white teeth isn't necessarily a good thing. So, if you haven't been brushing and flossing but you've noticed your teeth are getting whiter in spots, keep in mind you might be well on the way to decay.