Cavities are caused by a bacterial infection known as caries

An acidic oral environment drives the infection

Brushing and flossing alone cannot stop the infection

The good news is that the infection is treatable and preventable . . . read more to find out how

Cavities are the demineralised areas, or the holes, that form in teeth as a result of a bacterial infection on your teeth called dental caries. This infection takes place when the normal healthy bacteria in the mouth are replaced by acid-producing bacteria. This shift in bacteria is primarily caused by two things:

- Prolonged acidic (low pH) oral environment: contributing factors include a lack of saliva,

and/or a sugary/acidic diet that favours acid-producing bacteria.

- Transmission: this infection is contagious! You can be infected by someone through exchange of saliva. Drilling and filling has been the traditional method of treating cavities, but it doesn't treat the bacterial infection, just the symptoms. Brushing and flossing has been the traditional method of prevention, but it does not change the pH (acidity) of the oral environment or treat the infection once it exists.
- Visit a dentist who is performing "caries risk assessment", where they evaluate what factors are contributing to *you* getting cavities, and offer treatment beyond drilling and filling.
- Limit not only sugary/carbohydrate containing items in your diet, but also even non-sugar containing acidic beverages (i.e. diet soda, coffee, tea, sparkling water, alcohol). Consider the acidity (pH) of the dental products you are using. Do they neutralise your mouth? Know your pH. **Don't just brush and floss. . . neutralise!**
- Understand that fluoride can be important, but is used to primarily remineralise your enamel and make it stronger. Fluoride can help treat the symptoms (cavities), but fluoride's effectiveness at stopping the bacterial infection has limits.

- Xylitol is a very effective agent for limiting the acids produced by bacteria and comes in a variety of gums, mints, rinses, toothpastes, etc. Xylitol has been shown to make fluoride more effective.