

Cavities are caused by a bacterial infection known as "caries"

Caries is the No.1 disease children are facing in the United States according to the CDC

Brushing and flossing alone may not stop the caries infection

Safe and effective new dental products designed just for kids are now available



Cavities are caused by a bacterial infection on the teeth known as “caries”. Dental caries is the No.1 childhood disease, five times more prevalent than No.2, which is asthma. This infection in children is primarily caused by:

**Transmission: this infection is contagious!** The most common route of transmission is termed “vertical transmission”, which means parents or primary caregivers infect their children.

**Prolonged acidic oral environment:** this can be associated with a sugary/acidic diet or frequent nursing/bottle feeding. These factors can promote an acidic bacterial infection.

**Lack of good hygiene:** keeping the oral environment clean and at an alkaline pH is important even prior to the first tooth erupting.

- Dental caries is the No.1 childhood disease, 5 times more prevalent than asthma, which is No.2. Effective caries prevention during pregnancy decreases the newborn child's risk of getting the caries infection.
- Many children have had to undergo general anaesthesia, which is sometimes required to do dental work, before they are even five years old due to dental disease.
- 3 out of 4 kids will experience dental pain due to decay before school leaving age.

- Visit a dentist who is performing “caries risk assessment”, where they evaluate what reasons are contributing to *your child* getting cavities, and offer treatment of the infection beyond drilling and filling.
- Limit not only sugary/carbohydrate containing items in your child’s diet, but also even non-sugar containing acidic beverages (i.e. diet sodas, coffee, tea, sparkling water, fruit juices).
- Xylitol is a very effective agent for limiting the acids produced by bacteria and comes in wipes, gums, sprays, mouth rinses, and toothpastes that are safe and that kids love.
- Supervise a hygiene program for your children including the use of alkaline pH and xylitol products. Understand that fluoride can be important, but is used to remineralise enamel and make it stronger. Fluoride's effectiveness at treating the bacterial infection has limits.
- Check with your local water supply company to find out if there is fluoride in your water.
- More information on caries risk assessment for kids can be found in this [Policy Statement](#) from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.