

Oral Health Information for the Leader

A healthy mouth is a part of a healthy body. Healthy teeth are crucial to a person's normal physical and emotional well-being.

Why the concern with cavities and other oral disease?

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, affecting at least 95% of all adults in the United States. Cavities, or caries, are considered an infectious disease of the mouth. The cost of treating cavities and gum infections totals millions of dollars in the U.S. and represents an immense loss of time and productivity.

Diseases of the mouth may not seem to be as serious as cancer, polio or a heart attack, but oral disease is a health hazard. A cavity can lead to intense pain, complicated infection, emergency surgery and in rare instances, even death.

Studies suggest that expectant mothers who have poor oral health are more likely to experience early labor and deliver low-birthweight infants. Oral health, therefore, can impact a child's health for a lifetime.

Delayed speech, chewing difficulties, inadequate nutrition, low self-esteem and embarrassment can also be caused by poor oral health. Valuable energy and money are spent in seeking help for this preventable disease.

The Problem with Plaque

Bacteria are always present in the mouth, feeding on what the person eats. Plaque is a sticky, soft and colorless network of mouth bacteria and bacterial waste products that constantly forms on teeth. If plaque bacteria are allowed to grow undisturbed for 24 hours, they organize into harmful clusters or colonies.

- Plaque bacteria's favorite foods are carbohydrates, in the form of sugars and cooked starches. When fed carbohydrates, the bacteria produce acid-containing wastes. This acid dissolves or demineralizes tooth enamel. Repeated acid contact with the tooth over time weakens the enamel, causing decay and forming a hole or cavity (caries). Acid production starts when carbohydrates are eaten and continues for nearly an hour after the last bite if the mouth is not cleaned.

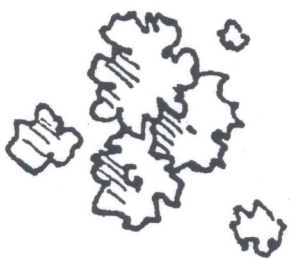


- Plaque bacteria can also lead to painful gum infections. Gum infections can cause swelling, tenderness and bleeding in the gums, loss of the bone that anchors the tooth, and loss of the tooth. Plaque bacteria can also be the cause of bad breath.

- When plaque is not removed daily, it hardens to form calculus or "tartar." The rough tartar helps plaque bacteria and its irritating toxins stay in contact with gums. Tartar must be removed---scraped off teeth---by a dental professional.

- Studies suggest cavity-causing bacteria are largely spread to an infant by the primary care giver, such as the mother. Transfer of bacteria from caregiver to baby comes from normal hand-to-mouth contact, shared food utensils and other

¿Cómo se forma una CARIE?



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Los Microbios

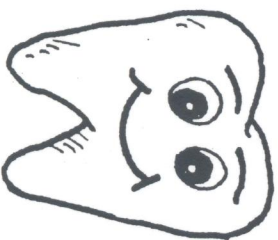
Los Alimentos

(Bacteria)

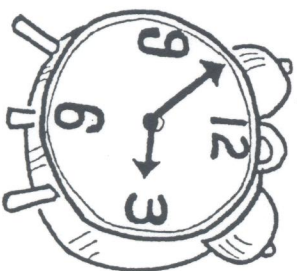
El Ácido



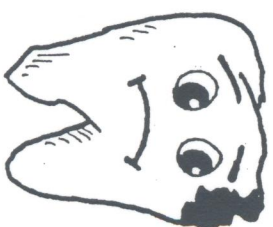
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El Ácido

El Diente

El Tiempo

Una Carie



Photograph of Plaque

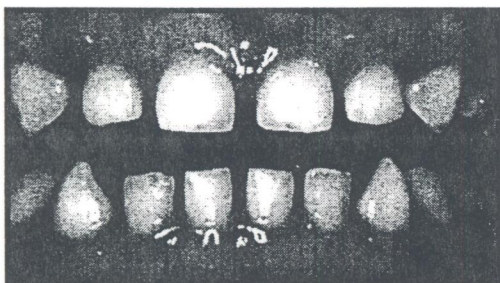


Thousands of plaque bacteria can cover an unbrushed tooth.

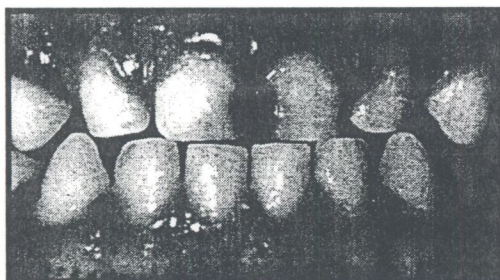


Photograph of Decay

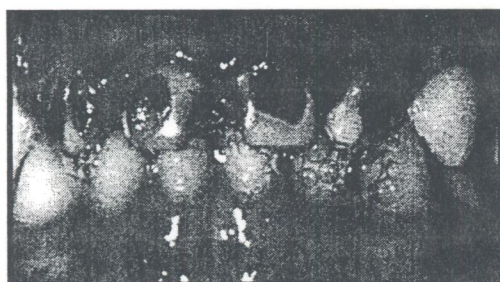
Copy here? Photos are from poster " Preventing Baby Bottle Tooth Decay"



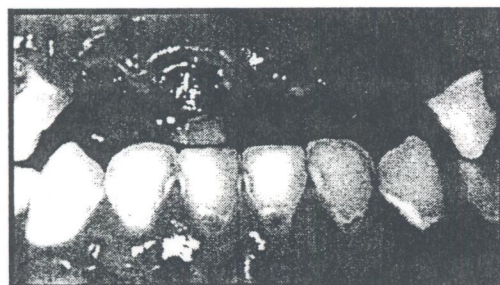
Healthy primary (baby) teeth



Mild Decay



Moderate Decay



Severe Decay
