



Teeth with early decay.



Taking control of rampant decay

As a team, you and your dentist can work out strategies to alter habits that are the most damaging to your teeth. A management plan may include many of the following steps:

- place temporary fillings in any large cavities to alleviate pain and prevent further damage
- recommend the use of additional fluoride (eg fluoride gels) to strengthen teeth
- plan changes in your eating and drinking habits by helping you to detect which foods and drinks are causing the decay problem
- changes in tooth cleaning habits - your approach may include brushing more carefully or frequently; using a high concentration fluoride toothpaste [usually for adults only]; 'spit don't rinse' after brushing
- follow-up visits over the next few months to check that your home-care program is working
- over time your home-care program may be adjusted, using different fluoride products
- permanent fillings in the decayed teeth will be placed when you and your dentist are confident that the decay problem is well under control and the fillings will be long-lasting



Teeth that recovered from early decay

Regular check-ups are essential to make sure that dental decay is still fully under control, otherwise further decay may occur. If even part of the diet control and home-care fails, the teeth will again be at risk.



Advanced decay

Your own natural teeth are the best

- to eat with
- to smile with
- to talk with

Don't risk losing them!
You can protect your teeth...

Team Effort

Long-term success will still depend on you!

Your dentist CAN help you avoid decay, but you may need:

- additional fluoride gels or mouthrinses to strengthen your teeth
- changes to your brushing habits
- cut down on sweet snacks and sweetened or acidic drinks

Further information

can be obtained from the
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Beating Rampant Decay

Your Dentist can help
BUT...

Only you can
make the changes
to protect your teeth
against further decay.



Colgate Caries Control Program

Prevent Decay

Sometimes we get into a habit of eating sweet foods and drinking sugary or acidic drinks continually, without realising that we are risking major problems with our teeth.

**Boredom?
Always hungry?
Comfort snacks?
Sweet tooth?**

But EVERY TIME we eat or drink, our teeth are under attack from food acids.

Rampant decay occurs when...

- **teeth are not able to withstand the constant acid attack that follows meals and continual snacking or drinks**

- **the decay process is out of control**
BUT... you can turn it around

Dental decay usually progresses slowly, but in some circumstances can destroy a tooth very quickly.

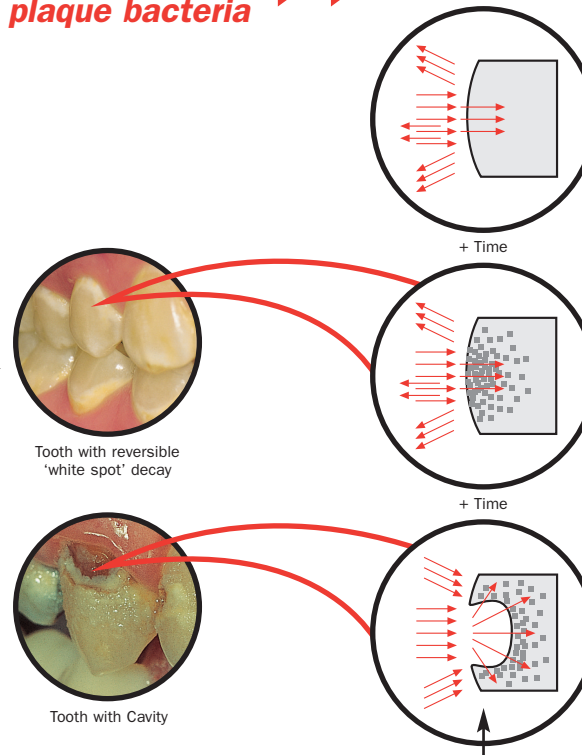
Teeth are attacked by:

- **acid produced by plaque bacteria; and**
- **acidic foods and drinks.**

The damage starts *below the tooth surface*, dissolving solid tooth, and resulting in a honeycomb effect of microscopic holes.

It can take up to 20 minutes after every snack or drink for saliva to wash away plaque acid, and then a further period of time to repair the damage. Fluoride helps to speed up the 'natural recovery' repair process, and rebuilds stronger tooth structure.

Sugary food + plaque bacteria ▶▶ **acid attack**



If the acid damage continues over a long period of time, the tooth becomes so fragile that the surface breaks through and a hole becomes visible.

As the hole gets bigger, you may see the cavity turn brown or black in colour, or notice your teeth becoming sensitive to sweet or cold foods and drinks.

You may think the decayed teeth should have permanent fillings as soon as possible, but for the filling to be successful and long-lasting, the decay process needs to be stopped. Sometimes a temporary filling is the best option while this occurs. Your dental professional will tailor a long term management plan specifically for you to help save your teeth.

Your mouth needs a team effort to strengthen and repair damaged teeth.



Why some people have rapidly-progressing decay

Attack/recovery are out of balance

Major changes in stress levels or lifestyle can trigger changes in diet or brushing habits and affect the balance between recovery and the causes of decay.

Too much **sugar** too often - overloading the natural recovery or defence mechanism in the mouth. Sticky sweetened foods and long-lasting sweets such as toffees and lollipops that stay in the mouth for prolonged periods of time are even more harmful than sugary snacks that are quickly cleared from our mouths.

Sometimes foods and drinks that we think are good for us may cause damage to teeth.

Insufficient fluoride to assist the 'natural recovery' following plaque acid attack.

Acids may hasten the decay process. Soft drinks, sports drinks and cordials contain citric acid or phosphoric acid that can dissolve tooth enamel quite rapidly. Fruit juice, fruit drinks and diet drinks, which may seem like healthy alternatives, also contain these acids.

Don't delay if you think you have rapidly progressing decay. This type of decay quickly damages the nerve and blood supply to the tooth, and can become very painful. The damage inside the tooth is usually much more severe than you can see from looking in the mirror.

Decay Decay Decay