

Hey Doc, Would That Do If I Don't Use Toothpaste?

Every morning and evening when we brush our teeth, we make sure that the dental plaque is removed from the tooth surface. The cleansing agent and particles in the toothpaste can help remove the dental plaque thoroughly.



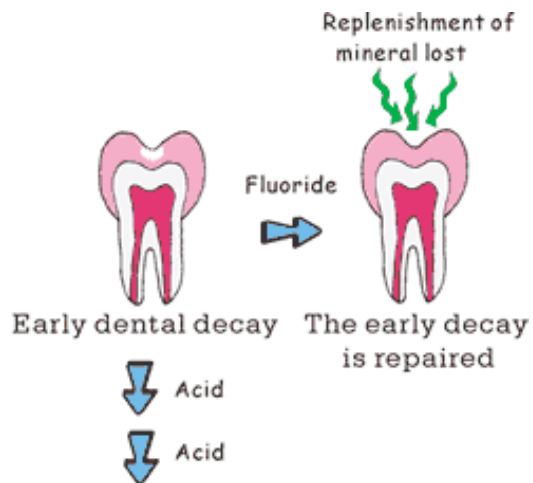
The teeth face a big challenge!

The dental plaque contains bacteria which metabolise the sugar in food to produce acid, causing demineralisation of the tooth surface. That is the beginning of the decay process and is called the early dental decay.



The early dental decay can be remedied!

Saliva can neutralize the acid and replenish the mineral lost from the tooth surface, but it requires a certain amount of time to complete this repair process. However if there is an appropriate amount of fluoride present in this stage of early dental decay, the remineralisation process can be speeded up to enhance the repair of the early decay.



Nonetheless, if the tooth continues to be attacked by the acid, a dental cavity may be formed. Then it will be difficult for the decay to be repaired.

Fluoride is very important!

Fluoride is important in the prevention of dental decay, its actions include:

- Accelerating the repair of the early dental decay by saliva
- Strengthening the teeth by increasing its resistance to acid attack
- Inhibiting the growth of the dental plaque and the acid-producing capability of the plaque

For the benefits of fluoride, the domestic water in Hong Kong has been fluoridated since 1961. To date, the incidence of dental decay in the Hong Kong people has declined a great deal. Recent research has also shown that communities who drink fluoridated water and use fluoride toothpaste experience a greater reduction in tooth decay. Hence to prevent dental decay effectively, besides drinking fluoridated water, there is a need to brush the teeth with fluoride toothpaste in the morning and before bed at night.



No need to use large amounts of toothpaste, a pea-size blob of toothpaste is enough!

Brushing our teeth with pea size amounts of fluoride toothpaste twice a day is sufficient to effectively reduce the incidence of tooth decay. Using excessive amount of toothpaste has not been shown to enhance the decay prevention ability.



It is necessary to pay attention to the amount of fluoride toothpaste used in a growing child, since ingestion of an excessive amount will lead to "dental fluorosis" which can affect the cosmetics of the teeth. Parents should therefore choose a children's toothpaste for their children. These toothpastes contain a lower concentration of fluoride. They should also instruct their children to spit out all the toothpaste and not to swallow any.

No need to use a fluoride mouthrinse!

For most people, drinking fluoridated water and using a fluoride toothpaste will provide sufficient fluoride to resist acid attack and prevent dental decay. Therefore, there is no particular need to use fluoride mouthrinse.

However, for those who are prone to dental decay, the use of a fluoride mouthrinse will have an additional benefit. They are:

- People who show rampant dental decay of their teeth
- People who are receiving orthodontic treatment
- People who have undergone radiotherapy and the saliva flow has been greatly reduced

Nonetheless, the above people should use fluoride mouthrinse under the guidance of a dentist.



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