

Hey Doctor, 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.



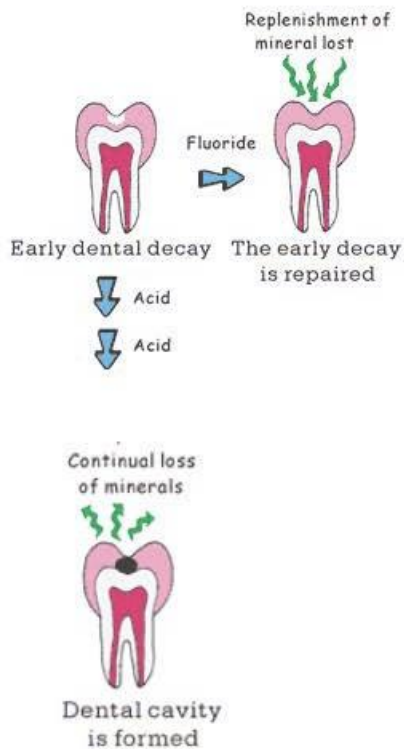
The teeth face a big challenge!

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 tooth decay.



The early tooth decay can be remedied!

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



Nonetheless, if the tooth continues to be attacked by the acid, a 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 tooth decay, its actions include:

- Accelerating the repair of the early tooth decay and replenishment of the lost minerals from the tooth surface by saliva
- Strengthening the teeth by increasing its resistance to acid attack
- Inhibiting the acid-producing capability of the dental plaque

For the benefits of fluoride, the domestic water in Hong Kong has been fluoridated since 1961. To date, the incidence of tooth 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 tooth 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.



Not necessary 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.



It is necessary to pay attention to the amount of fluoride toothpaste used in the children aged six or below, 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.

Not necessary to use fluoride mouthwash!

For most people, drinking fluoridated water and using fluoride toothpaste will provide sufficient fluoride to resist acid attack and prevent tooth decay. Therefore, it is not necessary to use fluoride mouthwash.

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

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

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