

Tooth Decay, Cavities and Fillings

Tooth decay, also known as dental caries, is a disease that starts just below the surface of the tooth. If left untreated, it can damage the structure of the tooth and eventually lead to a cavity (a hole) in the tooth. A common treatment for a cavity is a dental filling.

Preventing tooth decay

In most cases, tooth decay can be prevented and even turned around in its early stages with good oral hygiene, a well-balanced diet and regular dental visits. When you go for a dental checkup, one of the things your dentist looks for is tooth decay. Using a dental instrument, your dentist looks for pits and grooves and feels for soft areas on your teeth. Sometimes the disease is visible to your dentist, but often x-rays are needed to see inside your teeth for signs of tooth decay. If signs of tooth decay are found, it is important to stop it from spreading. Depending on the stage of the disease, your dentist may try to heal it with fluoride applications. As well, your dentist may suggest making changes to your oral hygiene routine and may discuss changes to your diet.



When cavities happen

If tooth decay is left unchecked, it can spread and lead to a cavity. During your regular checkups, your dentist will find most cavities in their early stages. Treating a cavity in its early stage will stop decay from spreading to the point where there is little structure left to your tooth. If you have a small cavity, your dentist may keep an eye on it or fill it right away with a dental filling. If a large cavity is