



Bite

Word of mouth

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Featured

It's contagious! How to control tooth decay and keep it from spreading

Have you ever watched a nasty cold or flu spread like wildfire? You've witnessed the force of a contagion. Yet, even that flu is not as contagious as the world's number-one infectious disease—tooth decay! That's right, tooth decay, followed closely by gum disease, are the most prevalent infectious diseases in the world today.

Most likely you know that tooth decay is caused by bacteria. When these bacteria are in the mouth, they stick to the tooth surface in a plaque layer. These bacteria feed upon sugars in the food we eat. As a by-product of their life processes, the bacteria then release acids onto the tooth surface. These acids eat into and dissolve the tooth enamel, and that is what forms the cavity.

The acids produced by the bacteria, then, are waste products. So if your household has any youngsters who balk at doing a thorough brushing, just tell them that not brushing means they'll have to go around with 'bacteria poo' in their mouths!



How does bacteria get into the mouth?

As adults, we tend to accept the fact that our mouths harbor bacteria. If we've developed good habits of oral hygiene, we're most likely keeping the bacteria levels at bay. But did you wonder how they get there in the first place?

Babies are born with nearly sterile, or at least low-bacteria, mouths.

This means bacteria have to be introduced into a child's mouth from his or her environment. Often it comes, inadvertently, from the parents or other caregivers. Sharing eating utensils or drinking cups,

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This month...

We're taking a closer look at those nasty invisibles that cause all sorts of dental trouble—we're talking about bacteria. Do you know where it comes from, how it damages, and how to keep your mouth fresh and clean?

To help with the above, Jenna discusses the ins and outs of flossing.

To close off, one of our clients—Jason, steps up for a great cause—Shave for a Cure. If you're not keen to go the clippers yourself, why not give your support.

Keep smiling...

Dr. Simon Franks



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for example, is a great way to spread decay-causing bacteria. As it's usually mum who spends the most time with a newborn it is often her bacteria passed down the 'family tree'—so if mum has good teeth its likely baby will too.

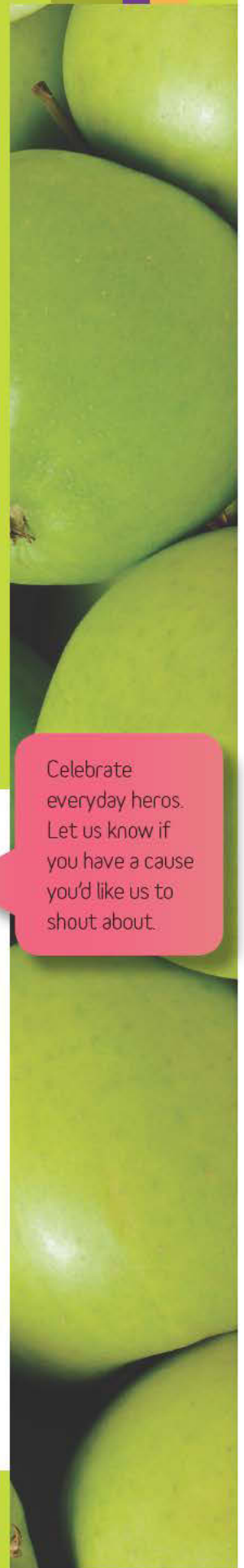
The next step toward decay is feeding the little microbes. And just as we love sugar, so do bacteria! While sugar is present in nearly everything we eat, foods such as cookies, candy, and soft drinks, really send the bacteria into a feeding (and acid-producing) frenzy. Sugary foods that are eaten frequently or that stay in the mouth a long time, such as hard candies, just give the bacteria that much more time to feed, build up their colonies, and produce tooth-dissolving acids.

What can we do to prevent tooth decay—especially for the kids?

Tooth decay is hard on children. Even though it's preventable in many cases, tooth decay is still five more times common than asthma in young children. It is also the second most common cause of absenteeism from school. Take these steps to help your child's smile stay in top form:

- Once the first tooth appears, begin brushing daily with a low fluoride toothpaste morning and night.
- Does your child like to fall asleep with a bottle or sippy cup at bedtime? Fill it with water only—avoid fruit juice or other sugary drinks.
- First tooth in? That's a time for celebration—and baby's first visit to the dentist!
- When the back teeth have arrived start flossing once a day.
- Change toothbrushes regularly.
- Don't spread the germs that cause tooth decay. Avoid sharing spoons, cups, food, or pacifiers. And of course, don't share a toothbrush!

Because preventing tooth decay is a lifelong proposition, these pointers apply equally well to adults—well, maybe except for falling asleep with a sippy cup. Daily flossing and brushing with a fluoride toothpaste, avoiding or cutting down on sugary food and drink, and regular check-ups all work together to keep your teeth strong, beautiful and free of cavities. If that's not enough incentive, consider this: cutting out the sugar is good for your waistline, too!



Celebrate everyday heros. Let us know if you have a cause you'd like us to shout about.

Healthy Hygiene Hints

Find a floss that fits!

You are not alone if you feel all fingers'n'thumbs when trying to get floss between your teeth. And before long—you give up! Although flossing does take some practice, there are lots of different types of floss out there and so it's also important to find the right floss for YOU!

As a general guide—if your teeth are quite tight together you should use a thin, waxed floss to help it slide between the teeth. Look for a 'ribbon' type which is flat like the name suggests (Oral B Satin for example). For those who have looser contacts between your teeth, a 'rope' type floss or 'dental tape' works best.

There are a range of nifty devices available now to help make the task much easier like flossettes, waterpicks and interdental brushes, so you aren't just limited to that silly string! Let me know if you're having trouble as there is always something available to make it easier for you.

Jenna



Community

Shave for a Cure

Jason McKenzie, one of our patients and the director of Surety IT will be taking part in the World's Greatest Shave which is taking place between 14th and 17th March.

Every day 31 Australians are given the devastating news that they have Leukaemia, Lymphoma, Myeloma or a related blood disorder. The Leukaemia Foundation receives no ongoing government funding, so supporting this event makes the Vision to Cure and Mission to Care possible.

Jason is hoping to raise \$1200 by shaving his head. With this \$1200, free transport can be provided to over 200 patients and carers to take them to and from hospital for a month.

If you would like to sponsor Jason please use the following link - <http://my.leukaemiafoundation.org.au/jasonmckenzie>



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