A Barrier to Decay

The rough biting surfaces of back teeth have deep grooves and valleys where bacteria and tiny food particles hang out. The tooth brush can’t always reach them in these crevices. Newly erupted back teeth are the most prone to decay. Sealants are an easy, noninvasive solution to this problem. They are recommended by the American Dental Association, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the United States Public Health Service as an effective means of preventing cavities. The application is quick, painless and does not usually involve drilling.

Sip All Day, Get Decay

The Michigan Dental Association has been airing a series of advertisements correlating the frequent sipping of sugary beverages to tooth decay. The sugar in juice and pop combines with the bacteria in your mouth to form acid. It is this acid that attacks your teeth and causes cavities. Every acid attack lasts 20 minutes and starts over with every sip. To reduce the likelihood of cavities: drink soft drinks in moderation, do not sip for extended periods of time or better yet drink water or milk instead of pop.

Grin and Wear It

Sports related accidents are reported to be the most common cause of tooth and face injuries. These accidents can result in irreparable loss of teeth (at the time of injury or during the treatment and follow up period). Mouth guards prevent about 200,000 injuries a year in high school and college sports. They protect the teeth, tongue, cheeks, lips and jaws from injury. Mouth guards absorb the shock of impact. They protect the teeth from chips, cracks, fractures, and dislodging. They also help prevent more serious injuries like concussions, jaw fractures and neck injuries by preventing the lower jaw from slamming into the upper jaw.

Are Your Teeth the Root of Your Problem?

Gingivitis is a condition where bacteria are allowed to build up at the base of the teeth causing the gums to be tender and bleed easily. At this early stage of disease, the teeth have good bone support. If this inflammation is allowed to continue, the gum may pull away from the base of the tooth creating pockets that collect bacteria and food debris. The bacteria work deeper below the gum line causing a reaction that degrades the connective tissue holding the teeth in place. The surrounding bone is thus destroyed. The tooth, losing its anchor, becomes loose and comes out.
The Comeback Kid

Why is tooth decay making a comeback you might ask? After all, our water is fluoridated.

There are a number of reasons we’re seeing a rise in cavities:

1. Soft Drinks—Sugary, carbonated beverages are the biggest reason for rising decay rates. They contain a combination of sugar and phosphoric acid which dissolve enamel.
2. Sports Drinks—These are often sweetened with sugar.
3. Sugared Breath Mints and Cough Drops—Many people suck on breath mints rather than chewing and swallowing them. This increases the exposure time to cavity causing acids.
4. Gooey Candy—Soft, chewy, sugary candies stick to teeth, making them cavity makers.
5. Bottled Water—Most bottled water does not contain fluoride.

Aspirin...the Fountain of Youth?

A number of new studies are pointing to aspirin and “NSAIDs” or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (like Advil) as miracle pills. Evidence is growing that regular users of NSAIDs are less afflicted by aging diseases than nonusers. A Dutch study done in 2001 found that NSAID users had an 80% lower risk of Alzheimer’s disease. A review of aspirins effects found that long-term users had 32% less risk of heart attacks. It is thought that these drugs benefit long term users by reducing inflammation, which is the immune response that causes pain, redness, and swelling at infection sites. Most of the problems caused by aging are linked to low-level inflammation. Unfortunately there are few guides on which anti-inflammatory pill to take, what is the right dose, or whether the benefits outweigh the side effects. Check with your physician before starting a regular regimen because serious gastrointestinal bleeding can result.

How Can I Decrease the Effects of Aging?

- Before popping pills, get off your buns and get to the dentist. Gum disease can lead to inflammation in other parts of your body. Weight loss and exercise also have anti-inflammatory effects, without the side effects of pills.
- Consider medication. Low-dose aspirin is often recommended to patients at risk of a heart attack. Cancer researchers are excited about COX-2 inhibitors like Celebrex. Those looking to avoid Alzheimer’s have had luck with statins or cholesterol reducing medications.
- Go Easy on the Dose—Even low doses of aspirin and other NSAIDS raises your risk of ulcers and gastrointestinal bleeding.
- Don’t Bank on Short-term Gain—Anti-inflammatories must be taken for well over a year to significantly lower risk.

Stranded on a Desert Island

According to a recent survey, when given the choice among: a personal computer, an automobile, a cellular phone, a microwave and a toothbrush, 42% of all adults and 34% of teens choose a toothbrush as the device they could not live without. The toothbrush was invented in 1498 by the Chinese. It consisted of boar bristles and a bone handle. Nylon bristled disposable brushes did not become readily available until 1939.

Good Oral Hygiene

Take responsibility for good dental health.
- Quit Smoking- smoking affects the small blood vessels to the gums which impairs the flow of nutrients and makes it difficult for the gum to repair itself.
- Improve your diet- there is evidence that suggests a high fat diet leads to gum disease.
- Brush your teeth twice daily and floss regularly—Flossing removes bacteria the brush cannot reach.
- Get your teeth cleaned at least two times yearly.