

What Is a Cavity?

You have probably heard of cavities in teeth before. The word cavity means empty space. A cavity in a tooth is a tiny hole that forms. A cavity causes damage to the tooth.

Treatment

Cavities are the result of tooth decay, and they can increase in size over time. Because of this, they need to be filled by a dentist. Sometimes cavities are visible to the human eye. Sometimes they are detected when the dentist takes x-rays of a patient's teeth.

Usually, the area around the tooth is numbed when a cavity is filled at the dentist's office. The patient is more comfortable this way. First, the dentist drills away the damaged area of the tooth with a very small drill. Then, the dentist fills the cavity with a strong material. Sometimes the filling is the same color as the tooth, or sometimes it is a metallic color.

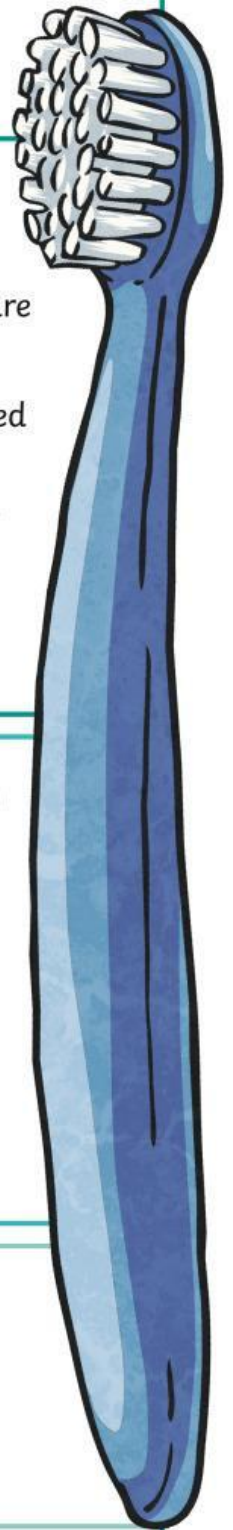
Causes

Cavities are caused by a substance called plaque. Plaque is a slimy material that develops on teeth. It is made up of germs and causes acid to build-up on your teeth. This acid breaks down the shiny, protective coating called enamel. Once the enamel is worn away, it is easier for germs to move in and cause tooth decay. This tooth decay causes cavities.

Not brushing your teeth and flossing regularly can lead to a build-up of plaque. Eating and drinking sugary substances also can cause tooth decay.

Prevention

Cavities can be painful, and it is best to prevent them. Preventing cavities is simple. Avoid eating and drinking too much sugar. Also, make sure to brush your teeth twice a day. Be sure to remember to floss!



Questions

1. What causes plaque?
 - vegetables
 - meat
 - sugar
 - protein
2. What does the word cavity mean?
 - sugar
 - bacteria
 - empty space
 - build-up
3. How are cavities treated?
 - a dentist puts medicine on it
 - a dentist fills it
 - a dentist removes the tooth
 - a dentist ignores it
4. How can cavities be prevented?
 - brushing and flossing
 - eating sugary foods
 - getting enough sleep
 - using mouthwash
5. How are cavities detected?

6. How will you protect your teeth from cavities?
