

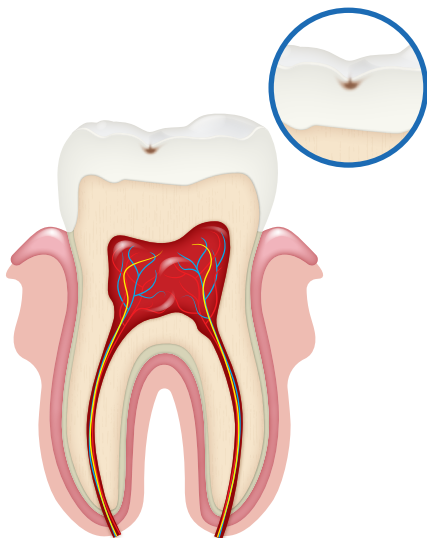


Dental Caries:

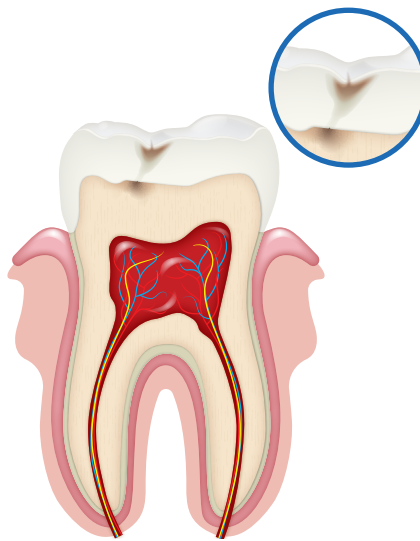
A Guide for Healthcare Professionals

**World Cavity-Free
Future Day**

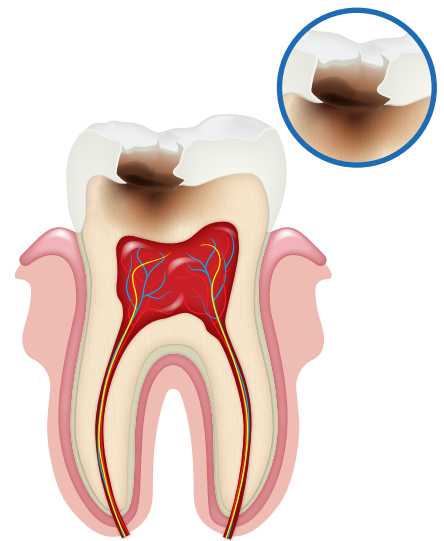
October 14th, 2019



Initial-Stage Caries



Moderate-Stage Caries



Extensive-Stage Caries

What is Dental Caries?

Dental caries is a biofilm-mediated, sugar-driven, multifactorial, dynamic disease that results in the phasic demineralization and remineralization of dental hard tissues. Caries can occur throughout life, both in primary and permanent dentitions, and can damage the tooth crown and exposed root surfaces. The balance between pathological and protective factors influences the initiation and progression of caries. This interplay between factors underpins the classification of individuals and groups into caries risk categories, allowing an increasingly tailored approach to care. Dental caries is an unevenly distributed, preventable disease with considerable economic and quality-of-life burdens.



Who Is Affected?

Dental caries is the most common, preventable chronic disease on the planet, yet it remains largely untreated, resulting in high levels of cavities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 60–90% of school children and nearly 100% of adults worldwide have dental cavities.

What Should You Look Out For?

While early caries and some later stage lesions may not have any symptoms, the following symptoms may begin to emerge when the decay has progressed through the enamel:

- Oral pain and discomfort.
- Bad breath or an unpleasant taste in the mouth.
- Brown, black or grey spots appearing on the teeth.
- Sensitivity to sweet, hot or cold food or drinks.

How Can You Help Your Patients?

Noticing these symptoms and knowing how to talk to your patient about them can make a positive impact on their comfort and well-being. Keeping an up to date list of local dental professionals to whom you can refer the patient, and counselling them on what to expect during a visit to the dentist will be extremely helpful:

- The dentist will look at the teeth to assess any caries lesions on individual tooth surfaces.
- The dentist may take X-rays of the teeth to show newly forming decay, particularly between teeth.
- On less advanced lesions, the dentist may recommend a preventive intervention such as a fluoride varnish and recommend diet and oral hygiene changes that the patient can make to prevent the disease progressing.
- For more advanced lesions, the dentist will recommend that the decayed tooth tissue is removed, and the gap left to be filled. This is what the patient will know as a 'filling' and, for larger lesions, may also require a 'crown'.
- If the decay has spread to the pulp in the centre of the tooth, the patient will require a 'root canal' treatment to be performed (which removes the bacteria from the pulp) and the tooth will then be filled.
- In very severe cases of decay, the dentist may recommend removal of the entire tooth.



How Can You Make a Difference?

Caries caught in the very early stages can be reversed. To prevent cavities, an essential step is to start educating patients on the importance of good oral care for all age groups. Caries is a highly prevalent condition among children, even among very young children as it affects their primary dentition, however the demographic transition towards ageing societies with considerably more people keeping their natural teeth into old age, has resulted in a relative shift in the burden of untreated caries towards adults (18–65 years of age) and older adults (>65 years of age). Having considered the scientific, clinical and public health aspects of caries, it is important to encourage patients to appreciate the impact that the disease has on quality of life across the life course, and to take appropriate action to prevent and manage caries for themselves and their families.

About the Alliance for a Cavity-Free Future (ACFF)

The ACFF is a Global not-for-profit organisation which seeks to promote integrated clinical and public health action to confront the disease burden of caries, fight caries initiation and progression, and, along with a global community of supporters, progress towards a Cavity-Free Future for all age groups. The ACFF was established in collaboration with a worldwide panel of experts in dentistry and public health who share a fervent belief in joining together across professional, geographic, and stakeholder lines, to create a unified global movement dutifully committed to combating caries in communities around the world.

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Stop Caries NOW for a Cavity-Free Future