

# Cavities

Cavities are the most common chronic disease of childhood. In fact, they are five times more prevalent than asthma! Cavities are frequently found in the grooves on the biting surfaces or in between teeth. They are caused by bacteria in the mouth that digest sugars and produce acid. The acid dissolves the enamel surface of the teeth, creating holes called cavities.

Many factors are beyond your control such as proteins in your saliva, tooth shape, and the type of bacteria present in the mouth. However, some of these factors can be controlled:

- 1) **Brushing & flossing-** Brushing should be done morning and night for two minutes with a fluoride toothpaste. Flossing should be done every night. Most children need assistance from parents to floss and brush, and many aids are available over the counter.



- 2) **Fluoride-** Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. Rinsing with a fluoride rinse such as ACT can help to strengthen your teeth. Children at a high risk for cavities may be prescribed a special fluoride gel or toothpaste to be used as directed after night-time brushing and flossing.



- 3) **Foods-** Aim for three healthy meals and two healthy snacks a day. Avoid grazing and snacking between meals and avoid foods that are sugary and sticky such as gummy vitamins, fruit snacks, fruit roll ups, dried fruits and carbohydrates such as chips, pretzels, crackers, and cookies. Offer your child healthy snacks such as fruit, veggies, yogurt, mozzarella cheese, or string cheese.



- 4) **Xylitol-** This naturally occurring sugar found in many fruits and vegetables has been shown to decrease plaque formation and cavities. You can benefit from these cavity-reducing qualities by using chewing gum and candies that contain xylitol as a sugar instead of sucrose, glucose, or fructose.

