

The Tooth Decay Process: A Tug of War

Did you know that a dental cavity is the result of a tooth decay process that happens over time? Throughout the day a tug of war takes place in your child's mouth. On one side is dental plaque feeding on sugar and starch and producing acids that eat away the minerals in the hard enamel layer of their tooth. On the other side is saliva, rich in calcium and phosphate, and fluoride that are ready to replace minerals lost during an "acid attack".

This tug of war goes on all day long as they eat and drink. But when there are more acid attacks than opportunities for saliva and fluoride to repair their teeth, the enamel is permanently weakened and destroyed, forming a cavity. Teeth then lose the battle to tooth decay. Win the tug of war by encouraging your child to:

- Drink tap water with fluoride to quench thirst (when possible).
- Limit between-meal snacks and drinks to decrease acid attacks on teeth.
- Save candy, cookies, soda, and other sugary drinks for special occasions. Consume these at meal times when more saliva is produced.
- Brush with a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste two times a day. Spit when finished brushing and don't rinse.
- You can also ask your dentist about fluoride gel, foam or varnish for extra protection.



With summer approaching, most of us spend at least a little time in the sun every day. You may know someone that works outdoors, and others who use indoor tanning equipment. The fact is that ultraviolet radiation from both the sun and indoor tanning is linked to not only skin cancers, but also many other health risks including eye damage, a weakened immune system and an increased risk of other types of cancer. Protect yourself and your family at home, at work and at play. For more information visit: <http://albertapreventscancer.ca/reduce-your-risk/limit-uv-rays/>

Nicotine Poisoning

Found in the leaves of the tobacco plant, nicotine is a powerful drug. It is highly addictive and very poisonous. While it is bitter tasting in its natural form, many tobacco and tobacco-like products contain tempting flavour additives (such as candy or fruit) to mask the bitterness, which can make such products more appealing to kids.

Nicotine is easily absorbed if swallowed or spilled on the skin. Even a small amount of liquid nicotine (such as that found in some e-cigarette cartridges) can be harmful, or even fatal, to a young child. If you use tobacco, or tobacco-like products, such as e-cigarettes or hookah, it is important to keep them away from children and pets to help prevent nicotine poisoning. Studies have found that some tobacco-like products labelled as nicotine-free or herbal do contain nicotine, so it's important to take precautions. Nicotine is also found in medications used to treat tobacco addiction. These are known as Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs), which include:

- Gum
- Patch
- Lozenge
- Mouth Spray
- Inhaler

As with any medication, it is important to ensure NRTs are kept out of the reach of children. Be sure to dispose of these products carefully. In particular, NRTs and the liquids found in e-cigarettes, should be stored and disposed of like poison. If liquid comes in contact with skin or is swallowed, or if you suspect your child has ingested tobacco products, contact the Poison and Drug Information Service (PADIS) toll-free at 1-800-332-1414 for advice and referral. For more information and support for tobacco use, visit albertaquits.ca or call 1-866-710-QUIT(7848).