



### What is dental disease?

Dental disease affects the teeth, gums and mouth. A common kind of dental disease is a **cavity** (a hole in a tooth). Cavities can be prevented and stopped.

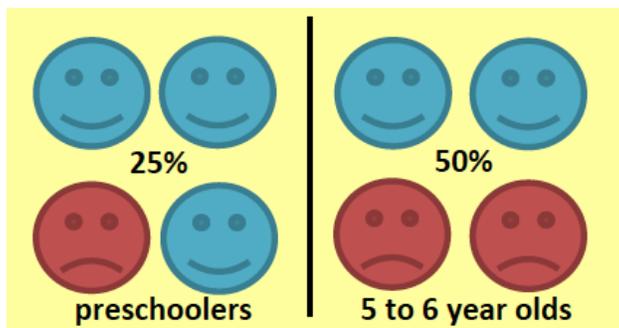
### How do cavities form?

Healthy teeth do not have cavities. When we eat or drink anything with sugar or starch, bacteria in the mouth turn the sugars and starches into acids. The acids strip away healthy minerals from the teeth.

Having too many sugary or starchy foods or drinks can cause cavities.

### Are cavities common?

Almost 25% of children younger than age 5 have cavities. About 50% of 5-6 year olds have cavities.



### How can I keep my child from getting cavities?

Cavities and gum problems can happen once the disease has started. By working together, we can stop these diseases from starting. Follow these steps to help keep cavities away and give your child a healthy, beautiful smile.

#### 1. Find out your child's risk

It's important to find out how likely your child is to have cavities and gum problems. At each visit, we will ask a few questions about diet and how you take care of your child's mouth. We also check your child's mouth and teeth

for changes. We measure their risk of getting cavities as high, medium or low.

#### 2. Brushing

Brushing teeth removes the unhealthy sugars, acids and bacteria.

#### 3. Fluoride

Fluoride helps stop cavities by making teeth stronger. Based on your child's risk, we may recommend using fluoride or other products, like certain toothpastes, gels and mouth-rinses. Or we may prescribe toothpaste.

#### 4. Fixing teeth and prevention

If your child needs a filling, it is very important that you take very good care of your child's mouth. This helps the filling to stay strong and prevents more disease.

<b>HIGH</b>	Every 1-3 MONTHS
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Every 3-6 MONTHS
<b>LOW</b>	Every 6-12 MONTHS

#### 5. How often should my child have dental appointments?

Above is the general schedule for visits based on your child's risk level. We will check for changes in cavities, do the risk assessment and give a fluoride treatment at each visit.

### Do fillings fix teeth problems?

No. Fillings (and crowns) make the teeth look and work better, but they do not fix the problem. New cavities and broken fillings will still happen unless you change your child's diet and home care.

### Contact us

For more information, visit  
[bostonchildrens.org/dentistry](http://bostonchildrens.org/dentistry)

To make an appointment, call  
**(617) 355-6571.**