



**DENTAL  
PROFESSIONALS**  
*Whitesburg*

**Dental Professionals on Whitesburg**

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## **CARIES RISK ASSESSMENT**

### **HOW TOOTH DECAY HAPPENS**

Tooth decay is an infection caused by bacteria that live in the mouth. When bacteria attach to the teeth and multiply in dental plaque, they can do damage.

These bacteria feed on what we eat, especially sugars and starches. From these foods, they produce acids that penetrate the hard surface of the tooth and dissolve some of the minerals.

If these acid attacks are infrequent, and of short duration, your saliva can help repair the damage. Saliva dilutes the acid and supplies minerals and fluoride that can repair the minerals lost from the tooth.

If you have excessive bacteria, however, or if you snack on high-sugar foods frequently, or if your mouth is dry, then the tooth minerals lost is too great and cannot be repaired. This is the start of tooth decay and leads to cavities.

### **HOW WE ASSESS YOUR RISK FOR DECAY**

- We examine your teeth for:
  - Decay or demineralization
  - Deep pits and fissures
  - Cracks and fractures
  - Exposed roots
  - Ill-fitting fillings and crowns
- We do digital radiographs to see any decay/demineralization between the teeth.
- We use lasers to detect decay in teeth with deep grooves.
- We evaluate your saliva by measuring the levels of decay-causing bacteria and your saliva pH.
- We do a decay-risk assessment that takes into account:
  - The acidity of your saliva due to GI disturbances, high-sugar snacking, etc.
  - Reduction in salivary flow due to medications, radiation therapy, mouth-breathing, and other medical conditions.

## **CARIES RISK ASSESSMENT** (continued)

### **TOGETHER, WE CAN BREAK THIS CYCLE**

- Reduce the volume of bacteria by disrupting the bacterial plaque through excellent home care and professional dental cleanings.
- Reduce sugar intake giving the bacteria less to feed on. Increase nutrient rich foods into the diet.
- Change the nature of the bacteria by using xylitol gum and/or candy. This makes the bacteria slippery, making it harder for the bacteria to attach to the teeth.
- Make the saliva less acidic by using special neutralizing toothpastes and rinses.
- Make the teeth less susceptible to decay through fluorides, sealants, and well fitting restorations.
- For patients with dry mouth problems, use products that stimulate salivary flow.

For more information please click on the links below:

<http://www.agd.org/publications/articles?/ArtID=923>

[http://alkaline-alkaline.com/ph\\_food\\_chart.html](http://alkaline-alkaline.com/ph_food_chart.html)

<http://www.carifree.com>