

Protecting Your Oral Health

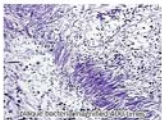


The two most common diseases that affect our mouths are infections caused by the bacteria that constantly live in our mouths.

We have come to understand that these bacteria generally do not cause harm unless they are allowed to grow on the teeth in a sticky film called **plaque**. From a perfectly clean tooth surface it only takes a few seconds before the first bacteria stick to the tooth surface and begin to grow into a complex bacterial community – **plaque**. It is this film of bacteria we want to remove when we clean our teeth and gums.

What does plaque do?

Plaque bacteria cause both tooth decay (dental caries) and gum disease (periodontal disease), and so to prevent these two diseases we must remove the bacterial community - plaque - from our teeth and gums every day.



Tooth decay (Dental caries)

Some of the bacteria sticking to your teeth in plaque break down the sugars and other carbohydrates that we eat, and produce acids. These acids dissolve the enamel and dentine that make up the tooth structure, and create a hole in the tooth. This is the process called dental caries or tooth decay. Once a hole has developed in the tooth surface you will need to have the decay removed from the tooth and a filling placed to seal the surface and build up the shape of the tooth again.

