

Common Dental Infections

What are dental caries?

Dental caries (CARE-eez) are tooth infections caused by certain germs in the mouth. Caries destroy the enamel (hard outer layer) and dentin (bone-like tissue under the enamel) of the teeth. Dental caries are also called cavities or tooth decay. Caries that occur in young children are more common in people who do not have good access to health care.

How can I prevent dental caries?

Taking care of your mouth is important. You and your family members should visit a dentist each year, starting at one year of age. You should brush twice a day with toothpaste that contains fluoride (FLOOR-ide), a mineral that makes teeth stronger. You can start teaching children to brush with a smear of low-fluoride toothpaste. When children are two to five years old, they can use a pea-sized amount of regular fluoride toothpaste. After six years of age, they can use more. Daily flossing is also important.

What is gingivitis?

Gingivitis (JINJ-uh-VI-tiss) happens when the gums are inflamed. They might be hot, red, and swollen.

What is a periodontal infection?

Periodontal (PAIR-ee-oh-DON-tal) infections happen when germs build up in the gums. If the gums are inflamed for a long time, bone loss around the teeth can occur.

How can I avoid gum disease?

You can prevent gum disease by brushing and flossing your teeth every day.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Information Resource

<https://familydoctor.org/mouth-and-teeth-how-to-keep-them-healthy>

American Dental Association

<https://www.ada.org/en/publications/jada/jada-for-the-dental-patient>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/index.html>

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