When you eat sugar - including healthy foods with sugar in them – bacteria also eat the sugar, make acid, and reproduce.

The acid they produce eats away at the enamel of your teeth, creating a cavity – a cave in your tooth.

Bacteria then live in these cavities, waiting for more sugar, to make more acid and more bacteria.

**Enamel** is made of hard crystal and is the hardest substance in the body. Your tooth enamel should last a lifetime.

The **pulp** contains the blood vessels and nerves that conduct sensations of hot, cold and pain.

So what causes bad oral health?
It really boils down to one word: **BACTERIA**.
**Breaking News!**

Your mouth is connected to the rest of your body!

**Diabetes** makes you more likely to have cavities, fungal infections, longer healing time after dental surgery, & dry mouth. Uncontrolled diabetes increases sugar content of saliva, which helps bacteria thrive in the mouth.

**Endocarditis** is an infection of the inner lining of your heart. It can occur when bacteria in your mouth spread through your bloodstream and attach to damaged areas in your heart.

**Oral Health**

**Osteoporosis** causes bones to become weak and brittle. The bone in your jaw supports and anchors the teeth. In severe cases, when the jawbone becomes less dense, tooth loss can occur.

**Cardiovascular Disease**. Research suggests that heart disease, clogged arteries, and stroke might be linked to the inflammation and infections that oral bacteria can cause.
4 Steps to Good Oral Health

**Brush** your teeth at least *twice a day for two minutes*, and replace your *toothbrush* every 3-4 months.

**Floss** daily.

**Eat Healthy**

Eat a *healthy* diet and limit between-meal snacks.

**Visit Dentist**

Schedule regular *dental* checkups.

**More good ideas:**

- Use a mouth rinse.
- Examine your mouth regularly.
- Let your dentist know if you have any medical conditions.
- Provide your dentist with a list of all the medications you take.
Common Oral Health Problems: 
**Tooth Decay**

**Warning signs:**
- Bad breath/taste that won't go away.
- Red, swollen, tender, or bleeding gums.
- Painful chewing, loose or sensitive teeth.
- Gums that pull away from your teeth.
- Change in the fit of dentures or the way your teeth fit together when you bite.

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Common Oral Health Problems: 
**Periodontal Disease and Periodontitis**

- Normal, healthy gums
  - Healthy gums and bone anchor teeth firmly in place.
- Periodontitis
  - Plaque left on teeth hardens into tartar. As plaque and tartar build up, the gums pull away from the teeth and pockets form between the teeth and gums. Bone supporting the teeth may get infected and start to weaken.
- Advanced periodontitis
  - The gums recede further, destroying more bone and the ligament around the tooth. Teeth may become loose and need to be removed.
Common Oral Health Problems: Medication Side Effects

- Dry mouth
- Oral yeast infections
- Gum swelling
- Skin inflammation in the mouth

- Mouth sores
- Taste changes
- Tooth decay
- Tooth discoloration

Early Detection Is Key! Talk to your dentist if you notice:

- Bleeding sores that don't easily heal
- Hard spots or rough areas
- Discolored tissue
- Changes in the way teeth fit together
- Numbness
- Lumps or irregular tissue in mouth, cheeks, neck, or head
- Sore throat, earaches, hoarseness, enlarged lymph nodes, or pain when swallowing
NEVER IGNORE:
Gum, tooth, or jaw pain  •  Bleeding gums  •  Loose or lost teeth
Sores, irregular patches, or lumps in your mouth  •  Recurring bad breath

How to handle dental emergencies:

Toothaches. Tooth pain is not normal. Pain that interferes with eating, swallowing, or talking is an emergency. Some tooth pain can develop slowly and cause tooth sensitivity to cold fluids or air.

If you experience sudden pain, rinse your mouth with warm water. Apply a cold compress to the outside of your mouth or cheek. See your dentist as soon as possible. *(DO NOT try the old wives’ tale of putting an aspirin against the tooth because it can burn the gum tissue.)*

...if you break or chip a tooth, try to save any pieces you can and place them in a cup of milk or water. Apply a cold compress to the outside of your mouth or cheek. If the broken tooth bleeds, hold a piece of wet cloth or gauze against the tooth until the bleeding stops. See your dentist as soon as possible so that he or she can replace the pieces if possible.

...if your tooth is knocked out, retrieve the tooth, hold it by the top or crown and gently rinse it off with water. Try to fit the tooth back in its socket. If it doesn’t go in, put the tooth in a small cup of milk or salt water. Go to your dentist’s office as soon as possible, or go to the emergency room. The sooner the tooth is replaced, the better the chance of saving it.

If you think you or someone else has a broken jaw, do not move it. Tie a towel under the jaw and over the head to keep it from moving. Hold a cold compress against the painful site on your way to the emergency room.
**Women** many be more susceptible to oral health problems due to changing hormones (estrogen and progesterone) throughout their life cycles.

*In Puberty,* production of female hormones increases blood flow to the gums and changes the way gum tissue reacts to plaque. Teenage girls also need advice about tobacco use, mouth protection during athletic activities, cleaning orthodontic appliances, developing good dietary habits, and avoiding eating disorders.

*During the monthly menstrual cycle,* due to hormone changes, some women experience bright red swollen gums or salivary glands, canker sores, or bleeding gums. This is called *menstruation gingivitis,* and it usually starts a day or two before the start of the period and clears up a day or two later.

*Menopause* causes estrogen levels to decline and puts women at greater risk for bone density loss and osteoporosis, which affect the health of your teeth. Receding gums can be a sign of bone loss in the jawbone, and bone loss in the jaw can lead to tooth loss. Receding gums also expose more of the tooth surface to potential tooth decay. Post-menopausal women may also experience xerostomia (dry mouth resulting from reduced or absent saliva flow).

*In pregnancy,* women are more vulnerable to cavities (due to increased saliva acidity), tooth erosion (due to vomiting from morning sickness), and pregnancy gingivitis (swollen or bleeding gums).