

Plaque

Overview

Your teeth are covered with a sticky film of bacteria called plaque. Following a meal or snack, the bacteria release acids that attack tooth enamel. Repeated attacks can cause the enamel to break down, eventually resulting in cavities. Plaque that is not removed with thorough daily brushing and cleaning between teeth can eventually harden into calculus or tartar. Brushing and cleaning between teeth become more difficult when tartar collects above the gum line. The gum tissue can become swollen or may bleed. This is called gingivitis, the early stage of periodontal (gum) disease.

Preventing Decay:

- Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks.
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams.
- Ask your dentist about dental sealants, a protective plastic coating that can be applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth where decay often starts.