



## FAMIPED

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## Preventing dental caries

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Dental caries is an infectious disease because, in order to occur, there must be a bacterium in the mouth called streptococcus mutans. This bacterium finds its best environment to develop when sugars are in a mouth for long.

Fighting against caries means avoiding the most suitable environment for streptococcus mutans and also strengthening tooth enamel so that teeth can resist better this infection's attacks.

There are several ways to prevent dental caries:

1. Not to provide with nutrients to the bacterium which cause dental caries: ANTICARIES DIET.
2. Be able to eliminate sugars from the teeth surface by means of brushing your teeth and using dental floss: DENTAL HYGIENE.
3. Strengthening tooth enamel with FLUOR.
4. Protect the first definitive molar by means of SEALANT.

When caries appears, the only solution is that the dentist cleans it and fills the gap in the tooth with a filling (its technical name is dental amalgam) or, if this is not possible, to extract the affected tooth.

### 1. ANTICARIES DIET

This is a nutrition without simple sugars, with food ingestion concentrated on some moments and having just water at intervals. It is a varied nutrition, with lots of vegetables, based on fresh foods, not treated or industrialized, which make us chew and crush food using our molars and cut them using our incisor teeth.

Total suppression of sugar drinks (juices, soft drinks, sugar infusions) and sweets and gums. It is better to concentrate sweets on a ingestion and brush your teeth afterwards than having them several times a day.

There is a sweetener that has a protecting effect because it makes the survival of this bacterium difficult: xylitol. It is found in chewing gums, lollipops and other sweets. The problem is that it would necessary to consume this product with a great frequency to be effective for dental caries prevention. Also, the products that are sold are not well approved and labelled. Nonetheless, it would be the only sugar which can be included in an anticaries diet.

### 2. DENTAL HYGIENE

- Toothbrush. It should be done alter each meal but it is fundamental alter the last one of the day in order to avoid that, in our sleeping hours (maximum rest interval) caries bacterium appears.

It can be manual or with a scrubbing brush (there are doctors in favour of one or other method), but it must be careful and with a toothpaste with fluor. Every tooth must be cleaned, in their inner and outer face.

The tongue must also be brushed.

- Dental floss. It is the perfect complement for toothbrush and it is useful to clean the gaps between teeth that a toothbrush cannot reach. If the gap is very wide (this happens with some people), it can be more effective to use interdental toothbrushes, special for this situation. Floss must be used periodically and in order not to harm the gumline, it must be done from this one towards the tooth Edge.

### 3. FLUOR

Fluor is a mineral which strengthens, helps to renew tooth enamel and prevents caries. It can be used systematically, this is, taken, or directly on the tooth (toothpaste, rinse, dental gel). Recent studies have proven that the most effective fluor to prevent caries is local fluor, directly on teeth. For that reason, we recommend to put toothpaste with fluor on the toothbrush.

If the child is young, the risk is that the toothpaste can be swallowed. For that reason, for breastfed babies and infants it is recommended an infant toothpaste (with less fluor) and in small amount and even some doctors recommend not to use toothpaste at all in these circumstances and use just water. The problem of swallowing toothpaste or having too much fluor with water is that this can cause a tooth disease called fluorosis, which tarnishes and even weakens them.

Rinses and dental gels that dentists use are recommended for these cases of special risk of caries.

### 4. SEALANT

By this name, it is alluded to a preventive measure that dentists use and that is protecting the inner face of the first molar teeth (six and twelve years old) with a white resin which fills the grooves and which are the points where caries begins.

Specially, it is important to keep your six-year-old molar tooth healthy since this is the point around final teeth will come and, if lost, there are many problems in the correct teeth alignment. This can provoke malocclusion and even problems in the jaw articulation in the long term.

VIDEOS FROM “COLEGIO OFICIAL DE ODONTÓLOGOS Y ESTOMATÓLOGOS” FROM SPAIN ABOUT CORRECT TOOTHBRUSH:

1. Manual toothbrush: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTEA6YxRHXw&feature=related> [6]
2. Interdental toothbrush: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jK5imyP1VQ4&feature=related> [7]
3. Toothbrush with an scrubbing brush: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amhLGgaf3ZM> [8]

INTERESTING LINKS:

4. In order to have healthy teeth: family and health (AEPap)

<http://www.familiaysalud.es/vivimos-sanos/higiene-y-sueno/para-tener-unos-dientes-sanos> [9]

5. More  
information  
about  
xilitol: <http://perlinfad.wordpress.com/2012/06/04/el-xilitol-su-lugar-en-la-prevencion-de-la-caries-dental-2/> [10]
6. Promotion of oral health: PrevInfad (AEPap) [http://www.aepap.org/previnfad/pdfs/previnfad\\_bucodental.pdf](http://www.aepap.org/previnfad/pdfs/previnfad_bucodental.pdf) [11]