

WHAT CAUSED MY CHILD'S CAVITY?

Tooth decay, also known as a cavity, is a hole in the tooth caused by acid breakdown of the tooth structure. This breakdown occurs primarily from bacteria that accumulates and sticks to the teeth. Plaque often makes the teeth look yellow or fuzzy, but can be easily removed by brushing and flossing twice a day. The bacteria in plaque consume refined carbohydrates (fruit snacks, juice, cereal, crackers, fruit/veggie pouches, etc.) and produce acid that slowly etches away at the surface of the tooth until a hole/cavity is created.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When we consider cavity prevention, we focus on what we can control which is hygiene and diet. Effective brushing twice a day and flossing once a day is essential and helps control the plaque/bacterial component of tooth decay. We encourage parents to help with brushing until a child is 9-10 years old. Diet plays a major role as well; sugary and acidic drinks, processed snacks, and refined carbohydrates are common, but often overlooked culprits. Families are encouraged to limit these foods and opt for healthier snacks like fresh fruits, vegetables, cheese, yogurt, nuts, and dried meats. For drinks, water throughout the day and milk at mealtimes are best. Even picky eaters can be guided toward better choices with creativity and parental involvement.

OPERATIVE VISITS

For your child's dental treatment, we typically recommend **nitrous oxide** (laughing gas) to help them feel calm, relaxed, and cooperative. It's a safe, mild sedative that works quickly and wears off just as fast, often used alongside local anesthetic to keep your child comfortable during care. To make the experience even more positive, we also provide headphones and a movie on the ceiling to help distract and entertain your child during the procedure. However, if the treatment is extensive, your child is very young or anxious, or nitrous oxide and local anesthetic aren't enough to safely complete care, we will provide alternative options.

SUMMARY TABLE:

OPTION	INVASIVENESS	AESTHETIC	LONGEVITY	BEST FOR
SDF	Minimal	Low	Varies	Small cavities, young kids
Composite	Moderate	High	Moderate	Small/moderate decay
SSC	More invasive	Low	Long	Large decay, back teeth
White Crown	More invasive	High	Long	Large decay, in smile line

TYPES OF RESTORATION:

SILVER DIAMINE FLUORIDE - SDF

A topical liquid that stops cavity progression, without removing decay.

PROS:

- Slows progression/"Freezes" the cavity. Buys time until patient is older/more cooperative.
- Non-invasive, no drilling or numbing required.
- Fast and easy to apply – great for young, anxious, or special needs children.
- Cost-effective.

CONS:

- Permanently stains the decayed area black.
- Does not restore the tooth's shape or function, only arrests decay.
- Needs repeated applications over time.
- Will likely require more definitive restoration in the future.



BEST FOR – Small/early cavities, very young/uncooperative children, or when other treatments are not possible.

RESIN-COMPOSITE FILLING

Tooth-colored material used to fill cavities after decay is removed.

PROS:

- Matches natural tooth color - more aesthetic.
- Restores tooth function.
- Minimally invasive in early stages.

CONS:

- Requires cooperation - some drilling and numbing needed.
- Shorter longevity/may not last as long as crowns, especially on back teeth.
- Not ideal for large, deep cavities.
- Does not prevent future decay on tooth.



BEST FOR – Small to moderate cavities, especially teeth visible in smile line.

STAINLESS STEEL CROWN - SSC

A pre-made metal cap, placed over a decayed tooth to cover and protect it.

PROS:

- Very durable - likely to last until the tooth naturally falls out.
- Protects the entire tooth, even with large decay.
- Often used with a 'baby root canal' if decay is near/into the nerve.
- Seals tooth to prevent future decay.

CONS:

- Silver in color - some may find as unaesthetic.
- Requires cooperation - drilling and numbing needed.



BEST FOR – Large cavities, after baby root canals (pulpotomies), or when long-lasting solution is needed. Typically placed on back primary teeth/molars.

ZIRCONIA CROWN

Tooth-colored ceramic crowns used on baby teeth.

PROS:

- Aesthetic - looks very natural.
- Durable, though slightly less than stainless steel.
- Covers and protects entire tooth.

CONS:

- More expensive.
- Requires more precise tooth shaping - more drilling than stainless steel.
- Not always covered by insurance.



BEST FOR – Large cavities, for those who want aesthetic options for front teeth or for back teeth when appearance is a concern.