



## 25 Risk Factors for Getting Cavities

### **1 - Cavities**

I listed cavities first because if you've had cavities in the past, that's usually one of the best predictors of whether or not you'll get cavities in the future. It makes sense that if you already have lots of cavities, that you're more likely to keep getting cavities until you make some changes.

Also, if you have white spots on some of your teeth that have recently appeared, that could be the sign of a beginning cavity, which also puts you at risk for getting a cavity.

### **2 - Having Lots of Cavity-Causing Bacteria**

There are millions of little bacteria in your mouth that eat your food every time you eat. They make acid and smear it on your teeth. The acid eats away at your tooth until a cavity develops.

Needless to say, if you have an abundant amount of cavity-causing bacteria in your mouth, you're at a high risk for getting a cavity.

### **3 - Eating Sugar Frequently**

If you eat sugar a lot, you give the bacteria exactly what it wants to eat: fermentable carbohydrates. The more often you feed them, the more cavity-causing acid that they will produce.

Learn more about What Happens In Your Mouth Every Time You Eat or Drink.

### **4 - Bad Crowns and/or Fillings**

If you have a poor quality filling or crown in your mouth, it may actually cause you to get a cavity by allowing plaque to hang out where you can't reach it with routine brushing and flossing.

### **5 - Bad Oral Hygiene**

If you don't brush away the bacteria often, you will allow them to grow and destroy your teeth.

### **6 - High Acidic Foods Intake**

Eating or drinking acidic foods can eat away at the hard, outer layer of your teeth known as the enamel. Since the enamel is the layer of your teeth that is most resistant to cavities, if you wear it down, you will be putting yourself at risk for cavities.

Learn more about acidic drinks in the article, [Nine Drinks that Can Dissolve Your Teeth](#). Another source of acid in your mouth is gastric reflux or even vomiting intentionally, which occurs in those with bulimia.

### **7 - Not Getting Enough Fluoride**

Fluoride makes the enamel of your teeth stronger. You can get it by brushing your teeth longer or using a fluoride mouthwash.

Curious about how fluoride works? Learn about the three ways fluoride protects your teeth.

### **8 - Nursing Too Long (Bottle and Breast)**

If you weren't weaned from the breast or bottle until you were a toddler, this could have put you at a higher risk for getting cavities. Most research points to the bottle, but I have heard conflicting reports regarding prolonged breastfeeding.

### **9 - Cavities Under Fillings**

Getting a cavity under a filling means that there was a problem with the filling (age, done incorrectly, fractured, etc.) or that you weren't taking very good care of the

filling. Either way, if you get a cavity under a filling, it puts you at high risk for getting cavities in other teeth.

### **10 - Bad Family Dental Health**

If your family has bad dental health, chances are that you will as well. This could be related to lack of oral hygiene being taught in the home, genetic abnormalities in the teeth, or high numbers of the bad bacteria in your mouth.

### **11 - Exposed Root Surfaces**

Receding gums will expose the root of the tooth, which does not have a protective enamel covering. Consequently, the dentin that makes up the roots of your teeth dissolves at a higher pH than the enamel. That means that weak acids that wouldn't affect your enamel can eat away at the roots of your teeth and cause a cavity.

### **12 - Defect In Your Enamel**

If you have a defect in your enamel, it could make you more susceptible to cavities. Some examples might be enamel that didn't form correctly, congenital defects like amelogenesis imperfecta, or a defect in enamel formation that can happen to a permanent tooth when its corresponding baby tooth gets knocked out.

### **13 - Having a Disability**

If you have a disability, it can be more difficult for you to take care of your teeth. Also, many caregivers may not pay very much attention to the oral hygiene of those under their care.

### **14 - Dry Mouth**

When you don't have enough saliva in your mouth, it is known as dry mouth or xerostomia. Saliva helps your teeth in several ways. If you suffer from dry mouth, your dentist may be able to help by prescribing you medication to help increase your salivary flow.

Are you taking one of these 348 medications that cause dry mouth?

### **15 - Genetic Abnormality of Your Teeth**

The anatomy of a tooth can vary greatly. Some people have deeper grooves in their biting surface that are hard to clean. Some people's enamel may not completely cover the whole tooth. This can create pockets where bacteria can hide out and cause cavities.

There are many other genetic abnormalities that can affect the teeth, such as localized microdontia, which can make some teeth smaller than others and possibly make them harder to clean.

### **16 - Having Lots of Large Fillings**

Many large fillings can put you at risk for developing cavities. Having lots of large fillings increases the amount of tooth:filling interfaces that are present in your mouth. If bacteria get in between the filling and the tooth, they can be nearly impossible to clean out and can cause cavities.

### **17 - Chemotherapy and Radiation Treatment**

Having chemotherapy or radiation treatment in the head and neck area can reduce salivary flow and cause other oral problems which increase the risk of getting a cavity.

### **18 - Eating Disorders**

Eating disorders can increase the risk of a cavity in a couple of ways. Those with eating disorders tend to not have a very balanced diet, which may contribute to cavities. Also,

bulimics bathe their teeth in acid each time they purge. This wears away the tough enamel surface of the tooth which makes the tooth more susceptible to cavities.

### **19 - Drug and/or Alcohol Abuse**

Those that abuse drugs and/or alcohol put themselves at a greater risk for developing cavities.

Take a look at what drug abuse can do to your teeth.

### **20 - Irregular Dental Care**

By not going to the dentist regularly, you avoid learning about the condition of your mouth. The dentist can point out small problems before they turn into cavities. By avoiding your checkups, you lose out on the opportunity to take care of small problems before they become big.

### **21 - Not Knowing What Plaque Is**

Many people don't know what plaque is. If you don't know what's happening inside of your mouth, you probably won't do anything about it.

Avoid this risk factor by reading: [What Every Human Needs to Know About Plaque and How Plaque Disclosing Tablets Can Help You Brush Better.](#)

### **22 - Not Knowing How to Remove Plaque**

Even if you know what plaque is, if you're not removing it then you will probably end up getting some cavities.

Learn about these [12 Weapons of Plaque Destruction.](#)

### **23 - Being Poor**

People with a lower socioeconomic status tend to get more tooth decay. There are exceptions to this rule, but this is one of the main reasons that so many states provide free dental care to low-income children. Unfortunately, these programs haven't eliminated the gap in dental health between the rich and the poor, and many poor parents simply don't find the time to take their kids to the dentist.

Interestingly, our computer software at my dental school tells us to ask each patient if they have a "low socioeconomic status." It can be an awkward question, and almost everyone skips over it.

### **24 - Dental Anxiety**

If you have a dental phobia, chances are that you will neglect getting dental work done. If you want to try to understand your dental phobia, take a look at these [15 common reasons people are scared of the dentist.](#)

### **25 - Braces**

Although braces can straighten your teeth and make them look great, they do increase the risk of getting cavities. Braces make it harder to brush your teeth and make it nearly impossible to floss. In order to floss with braces, you have to use a floss threader to get under the wire - I know I didn't do that when I was a teenager!

I hope you enjoyed the list and it helped you pinpoint the cause(s) of your cavities. I compiled the above list from my own experience as well as information from the following textbooks:

- " Treatment Planning in Dentistry by Stefanac
- " Dental Caries: The Disease and Its Clinical Management by Fejerskov
- " Sturdevant's Art and Science of Operative Dentistry by Roberson