Tooth decay is a disease that 50% of Australian children under six suffer from that can result in pain, the removal of teeth, bad breath and a whole host of other problems.

When we hear the word disease we think that it's something you 'get', that it's unavoidable or you might have done something to contribute to having it, but overall it was just bad luck. This is not the case with dental decay!

How to stop decay in toddlers
The key to stopping decay is forming good habits from an early age, and maybe undoing a few bad ones on the way.

Brushing children's teeth thoroughly twice a day for two minutes is vital. That's less time than it takes to make a cup of coffee to make sure your child isn't spending all day with harmful bacteria on their teeth and gums.

Diet plays a major role. When we think of the foods that are bad for our kids it is chocolate, lollies, and fast food that generally top the list. Yes, these foods are high in sugar and carbohydrates and cause decay, but not in moderation and with proper brushing. It is how frequently we allow kids to eat these foods that cause the real problems.

In fact, it's not just the foods that we think are bad that cause decay if eaten too often or over a long period of time. Savoury biscuits, cereals, snack bars and muffins cause damage too. It's best to make sure that your child eats set meals rather than 'grazing', has a balanced diet rather than eating too much of one thing, and make sure anything sugary (even if it doesn't taste sweet) is in moderation.

Babies can get decay too
As soon as your baby has teeth they are susceptible to decay. Never put soft drink, juice, sports drinks, flavoured milk, or anything sweet in your baby's bottle. You are exposing them to high concentrations of sugar for long periods of time which is a recipe for decay.

Similarly, dipping a dummy/pacifier in honey or sugar might get you a gummy smile, but it will do some damage sitting in your baby's mouth for hours on end.

How to check if your child has decay
Knowing how to prevent decay and forming good habits is the best method of making sure your child doesn’t have decay, but if you’re not sure, it’s wise to check every now and then.

For more information on oral health visit ada.org.au
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