

My teeth continue to have cavities

You thought the days of cavities were over when you were a kid. But what happens as we get older? We get cavities again--one of those miracles of aging gracefully.

The problem with cavities in an adult is that they happen in the most inaccessible areas, usually on the exposed root at the gum line. Those cavities are difficult to treat. There is no dentist who enjoys treating those cavities and they tend to recur because the problem that caused the cavities remains.

What's the problem? When we were young our saliva had a neutral pH. That means the mouth generally wasn't acidic. Our saliva glands don't work as well as they used to and many of the medications that are taken for the chronic diseases that we are treated for cause dry mouth. People with dry mouths get a lot of cavities.

Here's what you can do about it: 1) Talk with your doctor and determine whether you might be able to withdraw from some of those medications.. 2) Reduce the sugar in your diet. Sugar comes in many forms. Processed food has sugar. Candies, cakes, sweets? You know them all. Sugar increases the incidence of decay. 3) Measure the acid level of your mouth. Your dentist may be able to help you with that, or you can go to the drugstore and buy nitrazine test paper. Put a small piece of this acid-detecting paper in your mouth. Once the paper is wet, it will turn a certain color and you can measure the color of the paper against a color chart and determine your pH (acid level).

Here are some new approaches: One is xylitol. Xylitol is a sugar. You can buy it in any health food store. Xylitol has been shown to remineralize decaying tooth structure. The second is a rinse which neutralizes the pH. If you don't produce enough saliva, you can buy a rinse that does. Your dentist will recommend one to you or your pharmacist will. You are looking for a rinse with a pH of 7.0 or as close to that as possible. A simple home remedy is to use baking soda rinses. Their pH is higher, but will neutralize acids very fast. Take a tablespoon of baking soda, mix it in 8 ounces of water, and just rinse with a mouthful of it and spit out. Most only need do this 3 or 4 times a day. The third is to eat more raw vegetables. The fourth is to use the new calcium phosphate products which assist in the remineralization of enamel. You can look them up on the internet.

With diligence to detail, you can reverse the trend of tooth decay in your own mouth, saving money, discomfort, and tooth loss.

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