

Name: _____

What Makes a Toothache?

By Kimberly M. Hutmacher



A tooth can start to ache if the hard enamel covering the tooth is broken down. The enamel is broken down by caries. Caries is a disease that forms holes, known as cavities, in the enamel. It is caused by bacteria.

Caries usually begins in the grooves of molars, in between teeth and around the gums. These are all areas where food particles can get caught. Bacteria is always present in the mouth, and it feeds on these tiny food particles. As they feed, they produce acids that work to slowly break down the enamel of teeth, and create cavities. If the cavity is not caught early, it can lead to a toothache, and in some cases, it can lead to an infection.

The best way to avoid cavities and the toothaches that come with them, is to brush your teeth twice a day and floss regularly. Be sure to pay attention to your dentist as she demonstrates how to brush your teeth and floss correctly. Hopefully, if you listen to your dentist and follow her directions, you won't ever have to experience the pain of a toothache.

1. Put the events that cause a toothache in sequential order.

Write *1st*, *2nd*, *3rd*, *4th*, and *5th*.

_____ Bacteria feed on the food particles in the mouth and leave behind acids.

_____ Food particles become stuck between teeth.

_____ Acids eat through the enamel covering of teeth.

_____ The cavity grows and causes a toothache.

_____ The tooth's enamel is eaten away, causing a cavity.

2. Which is the most practical way to prevent cavities?

a. Always avoid all foods with sugar.

b. Brush your teeth and floss regularly.

c. Visit the dentist every month.

d. Chew your food more slowly.

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