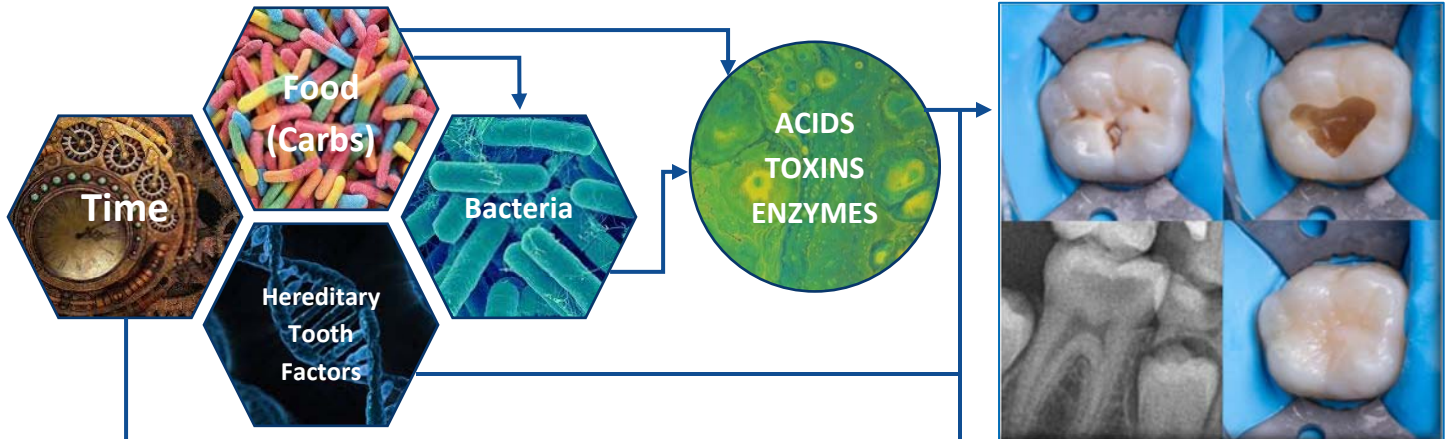


ALL YOU (NEVER) WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT CAVITIES



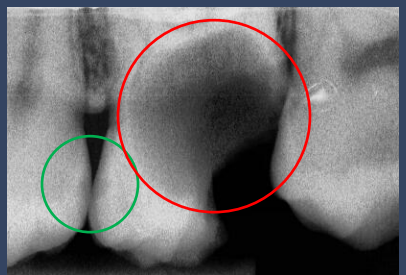
WHAT IS A CAVITY?



A cavity is a softening of tooth structure to the point that it results in a physical hole. It is caused by bacteria living on teeth that break down carbohydrates you eat into acids that destroy your tooth structure. Teeth will start the decay process at a pH of 5.5 (4.5 with fluoride). There are multiple risk factors (left) involved in creating decay that needs to be restored (right). Ask your dentist about different ways to control your individual risk factors.

HOW FAST DO CAVITIES GROW? CAN THEY BE STOPPED?

Decay rate depends on a person's individual risk factors (see above). Commonly, if the damage is superficial, tooth structure loss can be stopped by controlling the risk factors above (green circle). However, if the damage extends into the inner parts of the tooth, the damage continues to progress even with control of risk factors (red circle). On the fast end, decay can proceed all the way through the protective enamel layer over the course of about 1 year. Here is an example of how quickly cavities can grow in one person's tooth over a time period of about 18 months and how the cavity, treatment plan, and cost changes.

		
<p>Initial Exam: (Invisible to naked eye, doesn't bother patient) Plan: Medium-Large sized filling Cost: < \$500</p>	<p>1 year later: (Difficult to see, will sometimes bother patient) Plan: Root canal + Crown Cost: >\$2000</p>	<p>1.5 years later: (visible to naked eye, bothers patient) Plan: Extract + orthodontics or implant/crown Cost: >\$3,000</p>