

Are you at risk for dental caries (cavities)?

HealthPartners is committed to reducing the incidence of dental caries (tooth decay or cavities) among our members. Caries is a bacterial infection that, if not controlled, can destroy tooth structure. Your dentist will assess your risk for future dental caries, and discuss methods for preventing caries and reversing small ones. Your dentist will also discuss your risk level for developing caries, and recommend treatment based on your individual needs.

Low Caries Risk

You may be at low risk if you:

- Have had no caries in the last 3 years
- Drink fluoridated water
- Do not have other risk factors

Possible Interventions

- Use ADA approved fluoride toothpaste daily
- Have dental sealants applied to unrestored permanent molars (school-aged children)
- Review oral hygiene with your dental professional
- Visit your dental professional every 12 to 18 months

Moderate Caries Risk

You may be at moderate risk if you:

- Have had 1 or 2 caries in the last 3 years
- Frequently consume sticky, sugary or starchy foods
- Use unfluoridated water: well water, bottled water, water filtration systems
- Have other risk factors

Possible Interventions

- Use ADA approved fluoride toothpaste daily
- Use prescription fluoride supplement to age 16 if inadequate fluoride in drinking water
- Use a fluoride rinse

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Moderate Caries Risk (*continued*)

Possible Interventions (*continued*)

- Reduce or eliminate sticky or sugary snacks if you are a frequent snacker (see healthy snacks list)
- Have dental sealants applied to unrestored permanent molars and premolars
- Apply topical fluorides in the clinic
- Use a prescription fluoride toothpaste or gel
- Use sugar-free gum (preferably xylitol-sweetened) if you chew gum
- Review oral hygiene with your dental professional
- Are educated about the disease of caries
- Visit your dental professional every 6 to 12 months.

High Caries Risk

You may be at high risk if you:

- Had 3 or more caries in the last 3 years
- Have dry mouth due to:
 - medication
 - radiation treatment for head and neck cancer
 - a disease such as Sjogren's Syndrome
- Frequently consume sticky, sugary or starchy foods
- Use unfluoridated water: well water, bottled water, water filtration systems
- Have other risk factors

Possible Interventions

- Use ADA approved fluoride toothpaste
- Use prescription fluoride supplement to age 16 if inadequate fluoride in drinking water
- Use a fluoride rinse
- Reduce or eliminate sticky or sugary snacks if frequent snacker (see healthy snack list)
- Have dental sealants applied to unrestored permanent molars and premolars
- Use a prescription fluoride toothpaste or gel
- Use a prescription antibacterial rinse
- Apply topical fluoride or a fluoride varnish by dental professional
- Use xylitol-sweetened gum (if you chew gum), or mints after meals or as a snack substitute
- Review oral hygiene with dental professional
- Are educated about the disease of caries
- Visit your dental professional every 3 to 6 months.

Dental caries and nutrition

Although there are many factors that affect the rate of dental caries, frequent consumption of sticky, sugary or starchy foods is a major risk factor. The longer and more frequently these foods stay in your mouth, the greater your risk of tooth decay.

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“Tooth” healthy snacks

Unsweetened beverages: milk, tea, vegetable juices, ice milk and water.

Fresh fruit: apple, pears, oranges, nectarines, grapefruit, peaches, grapes, mangoes, pineapple, papayas, apricots, plums, cherries, melons, berries and pomegranates.

Raw, fresh and cooked vegetables: carrots, celery, peas, beans, cabbage, tomatoes, endive and sprouts (salads with oil and vinegar dressing).

Cheese: cheddar, Monterey jack, edam, gouda, farmers, cottage and cream cheese.

Grains: plain bagels, whole wheat bread, unsweetened cereal, pasta, low salt pretzels.

Other healthy snacks include:

- Low-fat plain yogurt and fresh fruit
- Cream cheese with vegetables
- Sliced apples with peanut butter
- Cottage cheese with fruit
- Lean turkey, ham or beef on whole wheat bread
- Nuts (although high in fat)
- Popcorn

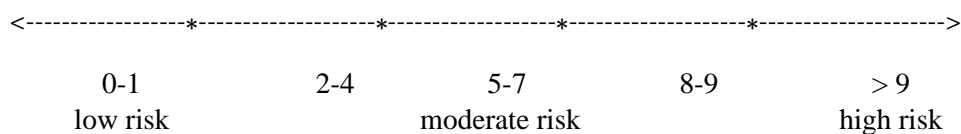
Compute your dietary caries risk*

- Examine the foods listed in the boxes.
- Place a check mark in the corresponding frequency box for each food item consumed at the end of meals or between meals (at least 20 minutes apart) during the course of a normal day.
- Add the number of checks in each frequency box and multiply by the number in that box.
- Add the totals in all the frequency boxes and plot your total point score on the caries risk line.

Food type	Frequency per day
<i>Liquid</i> Soft drinks, fruit drinks, cocoa, sugar and honey in beverages, non-dairy creamers, ice cream, sherbet, jello, flavored yogurt, creamers, pudding, custard, popsicles	____ X 1 = ____ risk points
<i>Solid and sticky</i> Cake, cupcakes, doughnuts, sweet rolls, pastry, canned fruit in syrup, bananas, cookies, chocolate candy, caramel, toffee, jelly beans, other chewy candy, chewing gum that contains sugar, dried fruit, marshmallows, jelly, jam, fruit roll-ups, potato chips, crackers	____ X 2 = ____ risk points
<i>Slowly dissolving</i> Hard candies, breath mints, antacid tablets, cough drops	____ X 3 = ____ risk points

Total Risk Points = _____

Your Dietary Caries Risk: Score _____



Good nutrition, adequate fluoride, sealants, and effective oral hygiene are the keys to oral health.