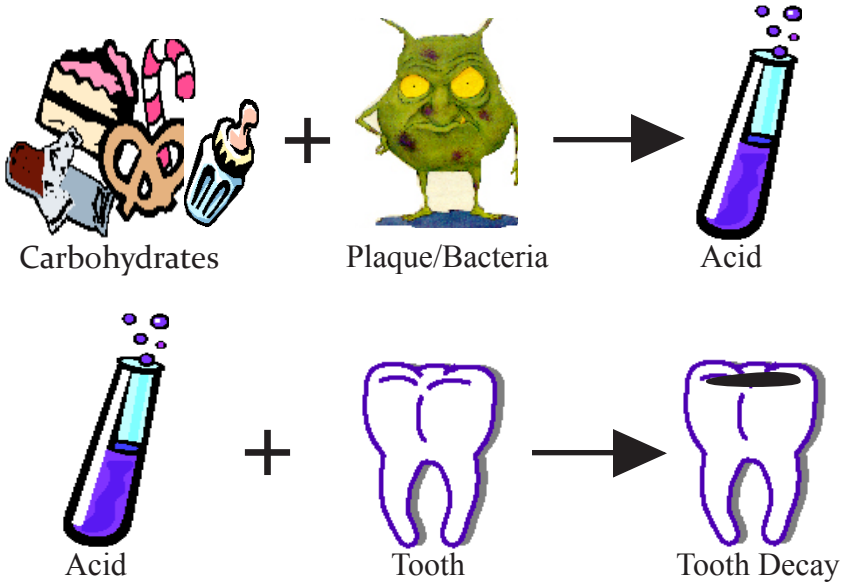
Tips for a Healthy Mouth

Tooth Decay

- This is the most common chronic disease of childhood.
- Germs in the mouth use sugars and starches from foods and drinks to make acids. These acids attack teeth and cause cavities.



Gingivitis (Gum Disease)

- This is an infection that occurs in the mouth when plaque germs are allowed to build-up along the gums.
- Signs of infection are gums that are red, tender, swollen, and likely to bleed when brushing or flossing.

Home Care

- Brush at least twice a day. This is especially important before bedtime.
- Parents should help with brushing until children are 7 to 8 years old.
- Floss at least once per day.
- Parents should help with flossing until child is at least 8 to 9 years old.

Fluoride

- Fluoride makes the teeth stronger and protects against the acids in the mouth that cause cavities.
- All children ages 2 and older should use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride each time they brush.
- Choose fluoridated water. If you use bottled water, check to see if it contains fluoride.

Diet and Snacking Habits

- Limit sugary and starchy foods and drinks to mealtimes only.
- Limit soda pop, sports drinks, and other drinks that contain sugar.
- Choose drinks like water and milk and foods like cheese, yogurt, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Dental Visits

- All children should have their first dental visit by their first birthday.
- Early and regular visits to the dentist are important to prevent dental disease.

Iowa Department of Public Health - Oral Health Center
1-866-528-4020
http://www.idph.state.ia.us/ohds/OralHealth.aspx?prog=OHC&pg=Screenings