

Enamel Caries – Early Tooth Decay

ENAMEL CARIES are the first visible stage of decay.

The good news it can be reversed or fixed!

Enamel caries begins as a white chalky spot or line on your child's teeth. This is an early sign of decay forming in the outer layer of the tooth and is commonly detected during a routine dental check-up or x-ray. They usually develop in areas that are not cleaned thoroughly, where plaque—a sticky film of bacteria—starts to demineralise the tooth enamel.



Early tooth decay or **enamel caries** can be managed and reversed with these simple steps. This requires a consistent effort from you, your child and your oral health therapist, working together.

1. **Brush teeth for 2 minutes twice a day.** Brush teeth morning and night with a fluoride toothpaste (at least 1000ppm fluoride). Fluoride helps to rebuild enamel and reverse early areas of decay. An adult should assist children under eight years old with their brushing.
2. **Don't Rinse.** Avoid rinsing the mouth after brushing. Spit out the excess toothpaste then leave the rest so it can remain on the teeth to keep working on repairing them.
3. **Drink water.** Sugary drinks speed up tooth decay, causing it to progress from the enamel to the dentine (the next layer of the tooth), which may then require treatment.
4. **Avoid food with added sugar** and give teeth a rest between meals by limiting snacking.
5. **Regular Fluoride Applications.** Your oral health therapist will apply a high concentration fluoride varnish every six months, or as recommended.

If you are doing all of the above already and your child is still developing decay, speak to us about tailoring a regime for your child. This may include:

- Swishing the toothpaste slurry vigorously for 60 seconds after brushing
- Attend six monthly reviews for fluoride applications and to monitor the reversal of enamel caries.

Together, you can protect your child's smile and ensure their teeth remain strong and healthy!



For information about free dental care for under 18s:

Visit: www.beehealthy.org.nz Call: 0800 TALK TEETH (0800 825 583)