

Some people are more prone to cavities than others. In dentistry, we call this assessment their “**caries risk**.” It is important to understand your own caries risk so you can take preventive steps to reduce and avoid cavities when possible.

## HOW CAN I DETERMINE MY CAVITY RISK?

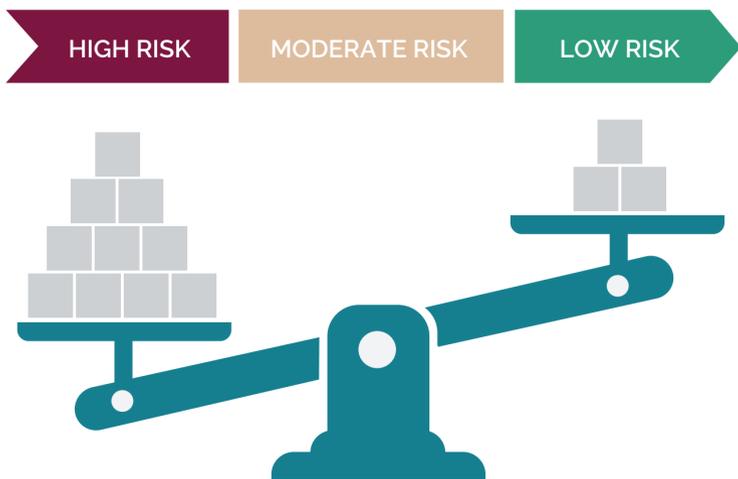
Dentists often use a tool called **CAMBRA**, or the

### Caries Management By Risk Assessment

to weigh the chance of cavity development on a scale from *disease* to *health*. This helps explain your risk and how you can tip the scales to better your health.

## YOUR RISK FOR CARIES

The higher your risk of caries, the more you have to do to tip the scale in your favor.



MAKE AGGRESSIVELY PREVENTIVE CHANGES	TAKE MORE ACTION TO BALANCE THE SCALES	STAY CONSISTENT WITH REGULAR HYGIENE
<p>This means, to prevent developing further cavities, <b>High Risk</b> patients should greatly reduce their sugar intake, closely guard the pH of their mouths, and perform consistent and effective plaque removal every single day.</p>	<p><b>Moderate Risk</b> patients should take action to improve both home care and the consistency of dental visits. We also recommend adding fluoride treatments and reducing sugar in your diet.</p>	<p>While no one can have zero risk, those with <b>Low Risk</b> simply need maintain healthy habits. This will include continuing good oral hygiene at home, seeing your dentist on a consistent basis, and watching your diet.</p>

## THE CAUSE OF CAVITIES & HOW TO CHANGE OUR HABITS

### WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE MORE PRONE TO CAVITIES THAN OTHERS?

Many unique causes can influence a person's predisposition for cavities. Often patients with a **high risk** will have several of these factors combined.

### HOW CAN I CHANGE MY HABITS TO LOWER MY CAVITY RISK?

You can lower your risk factors and improve your oral health through a few diligent behavior changes.

<p><b>ENAMEL STRENGTH</b></p> <p>Healthy tooth enamel is the hardest substance in the human body, and cannot grow back once gone. Enamel can be naturally thin due to genetics, or <b>can weaken over time from damage or erosion from chewing</b>.</p>	<p><i>To Improve ENAMEL STRENGTH</i></p> <p>★ <b>add fluoride</b> to your oral hygiene routine in the form of a toothpaste or mouthwash. In-office fluoride varnish, applied during your dental visits, allows greater protection for a longer period of time.</p>
<p><b>SALIVA QUALITY &amp; QUANTITY</b></p> <p>Saliva is the body's best natural defense against cavities. Since saliva is alkaline in pH, it counteracts the acid attacks from cavity-causing bacteria. With <b>strong enamel</b> and <b>healthy saliva</b>, your tendency to develop cavities is fairly low.</p>	<p><i>To Improve SALIVA QUALITY &amp; QUANTITY</i></p> <p>★ <b>stay well hydrated</b>. Your body cannot make saliva when in a state of dehydration.</p>
<p><b>ORAL PH</b></p> <p>Sipping sugary drinks and fruit juices, or health conditions like acid reflux and GERD can create an acidic environment inside the mouth. <b>Acid softens and weakens enamel</b>, making it easier for bacteria to penetrate your teeth.</p>	<p><i>To Improve ORAL PH</i></p> <p>★ maintain a <b>neutral pH</b> in the mouth. Stimulating saliva will help, but if the drinks you consume are acidic, reduce your intake and try not to have them between meals when saliva production drops. And <b>drink plenty of plain water!</b></p>
<p><b>ORAL HYGIENE</b></p> <p>The longer plaque stays on the teeth, the greater your likelihood for developing a dental disease. <b>Proper and consistent dental hygiene</b> will remove plaque from the teeth so the bacteria within your mouth cannot cause cavities or gum disease.</p>	<p><i>To Improve ORAL HYGIENE</i></p> <p>★ remember, both consistency and technique matter. Plaque collects on the teeth all day every day, so you should never miss a day of <b>brushing and flossing</b>.</p>
<p><b>DIET</b></p> <p>A diet high in sugar and simple carbs feeds the bad bacteria that produce acid and break down tooth enamel. Weakened enamel increases the risk for cavities. You should <b>cut out sugar</b> as much as possible.</p>	<p><i>To Improve DIET</i></p> <p>★ choose <b>snacks high in fats or proteins</b>, like nuts and cheese. Adjust your diet so simple carbs and desserts are part of a meal instead of between-meal snacks, as the increased saliva produced during meals can help <b>rinse your teeth of harmful bacteria</b>.</p>
<p><b>PRIOR DENTAL WORK</b></p> <p>The more existing dental work someone has, the higher their risk for cavities. Even wonderfully performed treatments carry a risk simply because <b>the enamel is no longer intact</b>. When there is an edge where the restoration (filling or dental crown) meets the tooth, dental plaque will collect there if not properly cleaned.</p>	<p><i>To Improve PRIOR DENTAL WORK</i></p> <p>★ follow your dentist's instructions for maintaining your restorations. With a <b>proper oral hygiene routine</b> you will improve your chances of preventing caries, and with regular dental exams you will be able to catch any concerns before they become big problems; potentially increasing the life of your restoration.</p>

## NEXT STEPS TO REDUCE CAVITIES:

Having a high risk for cavities does not mean developing new cavities is inevitable. By incorporating a few new steps, you can reduce your risk and prevent cavities in the future. If you have any concerns about your own cavity imbalance, let us help you today!