

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?

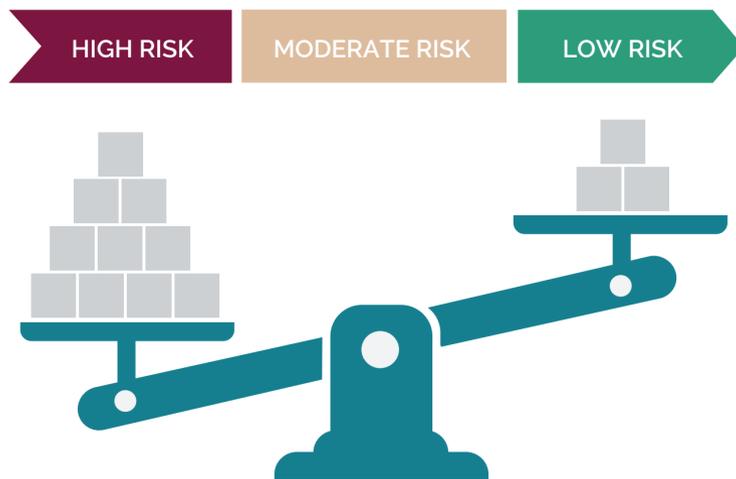
Dentists often use a tool called **CAMBRA**, or the

### 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

This means, to prevent developing further cavities, **High Risk** patients should greatly reduce their sugar intake, closely guard the pH of their mouths, and perform consistent and effective plaque removal every single day.

### TAKE MORE ACTION TO BALANCE THE SCALES

**Moderate Risk** 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.

### STAY CONSISTENT WITH REGULAR HYGIENE

While no one can have zero risk, those with **Low Risk** 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.

## 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.

#### ENAMEL STRENGTH

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 **can weaken over time from damage or erosion from chewing**.

#### To Improve ENAMEL STRENGTH

★ **add fluoride** 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.

#### SALIVA QUALITY & QUANTITY

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 **strong enamel** and **healthy saliva**, your tendency to develop cavities is fairly low.

#### To Improve SALIVA QUALITY & QUANTITY

★ **stay well hydrated**. Your body cannot make saliva when in a state of dehydration.

#### ORAL PH

Sipping sugary drinks and fruit juices, or health conditions like acid reflux and GERD can create an acidic environment inside the mouth. **Acid softens and weakens enamel**, making it easier for bacteria to penetrate your teeth.

#### To Improve ORAL PH

★ maintain a **neutral pH** 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 **drink plenty of plain water!**

#### ORAL HYGIENE

The longer plaque stays on the teeth, the greater your likelihood for developing a dental disease. **Proper and consistent dental hygiene** will remove plaque from the teeth so the bacteria within your mouth cannot cause cavities or gum disease.

#### To Improve ORAL HYGIENE

★ remember, both consistency and technique matter. Plaque collects on the teeth all day every day, so you should never miss a day of **brushing and flossing**.

#### DIET

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 **cut out sugar** as much as possible.

#### To Improve DIET

★ choose **snacks high in fats or proteins**, 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 **rinse your teeth of harmful bacteria**.

#### PRIOR DENTAL WORK

The more existing dental work someone has, the higher their risk for cavities. Even wonderfully performed treatments carry a risk simply because **the enamel is no longer intact**. When there is an edge where the restoration (filling or dental crown) meets the tooth, dental plaque will collect there if not properly cleaned.

#### To Improve PRIOR DENTAL WORK

★ follow your dentist's instructions for maintaining your restorations. With a **proper oral hygiene routine** 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.

## 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!