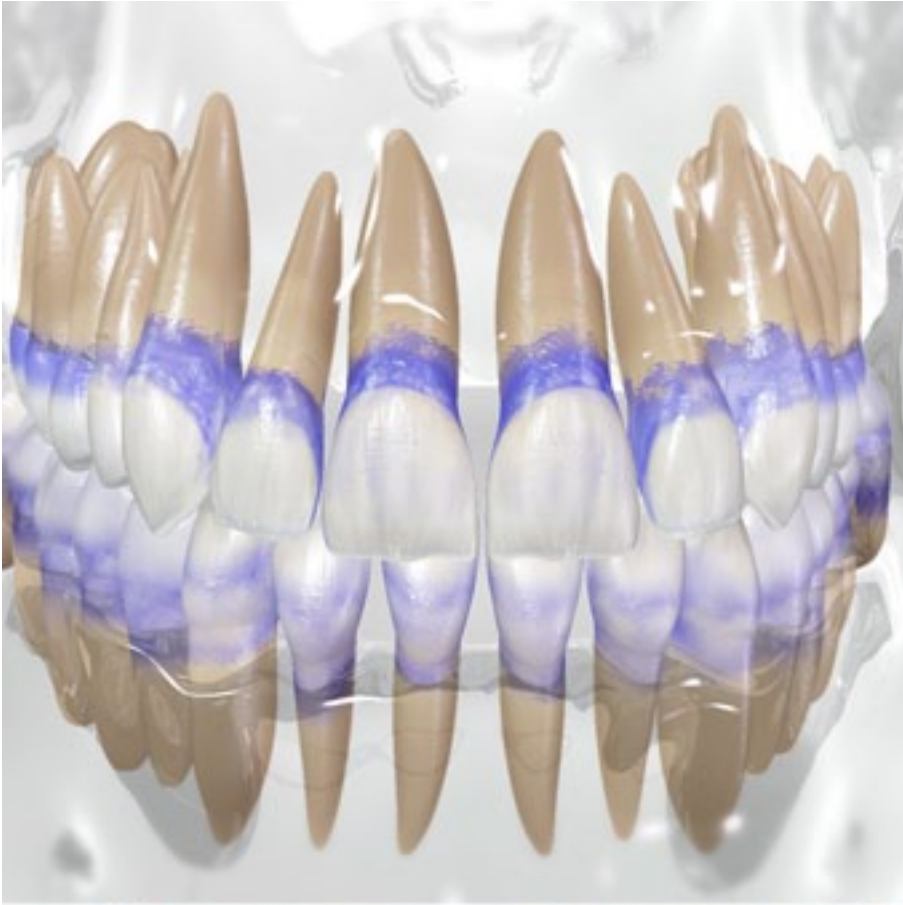


Dental Plaque



Overview

You know it's important to brush and floss to remove plaque from your teeth. But what is plaque? Why is it on your teeth, and how does it hurt them?

What is plaque?

Plaque is a thin biofilm that grows in your mouth. A biofilm is a film made of bacteria that stick to each other and to the surfaces they touch. Plaque sticks all over your teeth. You can't see plaque, but you can use a special gel or tablet to dye plaque to make it visible. You'll notice that plaque tends to collect between your teeth, in deep crevices, and along or under the gum line. Those are the places that are hardest to clean. Over time, plaque deposits can harden to form a yellowish crust we call "tartar."

How does it hurt your teeth?

Plaque is bad for your teeth. The bacteria in plaque react to sugar. When you have sugary foods or drinks, the bacteria release acids. These acids damage your tooth enamel. That's the hard outer layer of each tooth. Eventually, the enamel can become so damaged that a hole forms in your tooth. This is a cavity. The cavity allows harmful bacteria to get into your tooth.

Conclusion

Although the fight against plaque is a constant battle, it's one you can win. With proper home care and regular dental cleanings, you can keep plaque and tartar under control. Follow your dentist's advice for a bright and healthy smile.