

What is Dental Plaque?

Plaque is a sticky, clear film which forms every day on teeth.

Plaque is made up mainly of microscopic germs which are in the mouth at all times.

Plaque sticks to the teeth.

Plaque is found mostly between the teeth and near or under the gum line.

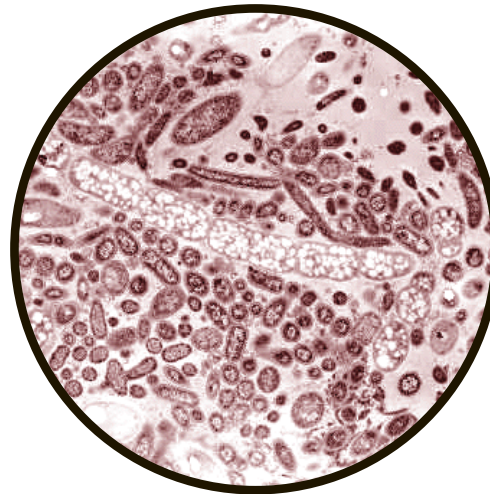
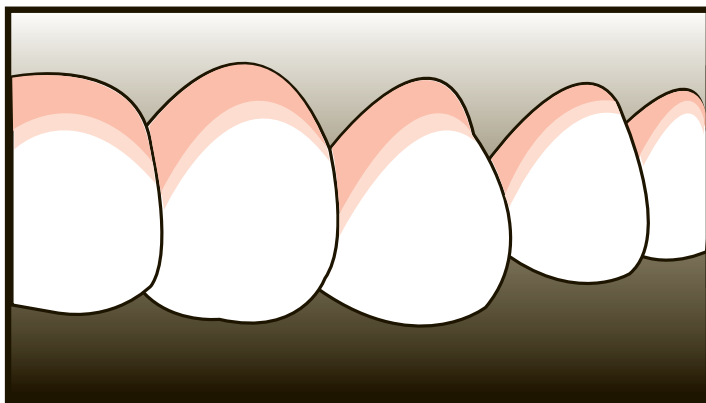


Photo of actual plaque germs
courtesy of Marilee Sellers,
Electron Microscope Facility,
Northern Arizona University

Plaque causes tooth decay and gum disease.



Plaque is almost clear and can be hard to see unless you color it with a special dye.

How does Plaque grow ?

Plaque germs feed on many of the foods we eat. Carbohydrates and sugars are their favorites. When these germs stay on the teeth, they grow in number and form into clumps. Plaque produces acid as it feeds. This acid is the major cause of tooth decay and gum disease.

How can Plaque be controlled ?

Some plaque is removed by saliva or by movement of the tongue and cheeks over the teeth. Brushing and flossing every day can help to control plaque. Regular professional cleaning at your dentist office is the best way to keep plaque under control.