

XYLITOL

What Is It?

Xylitol is a naturally occurring carbohydrate which has some remarkable attributes regarding your dental health. It can be found in many fruits and vegetables and even occurs naturally in our bodies. In fact, an average adult manufactures up to 15 grams of xylitol daily during normal metabolism.

Xylitol is sweet like sugar and is technically classified as a sugar alcohol due to its chemical structure. When the bacteria in your mouth come in contact with regular sugar and other carbohydrates, they metabolize these substances and one of the products of this metabolic process is acid. When this acid comes in contact with your teeth, it begins to breakdown or demineralize this tooth structure. Calcium and phosphate in your saliva will generally reverse this process, but if exposed frequently enough to this acid, a cavity can eventually develop.

Every time the bacteria in your mouth come in contact with sugar, they will produce acid for a period of 30-60 minutes.

Because of the unique structure of xylitol, however, it cannot be metabolized by this bacterial plaque and, consequently, no acid is produced. In fact, if exposed frequently enough to xylitol, the bacteria will actually begin to die. There are other sugar substitutes that are commonly used, and even though the bacteria generally cannot produce sugar from these substances, they do not have the anti-bacterial properties of xylitol.

How to Use It

Xylitol can be found in many products where a sweetener is desired. It is more costly than many other sugar substitutes, so is not used as often as these other substitutes and can be a little harder to find. It can be found in many health food stores, however. Look for products that are 100% xylitol for the most effect. We have found The Honeytree Health Food Store in Market Square has an assortment of xylitol products including, **gum, mints and an oral rinse**. In addition, we have xylitol mints and oral spray here in our office.

To be most effective, xylitol needs to be used from 3-5 times per day, preferably after eating. When used in combination with other products we may recommend along with good oral hygiene, we can actually begin to rebuild and remineralize teeth that are well on their way to becoming cavities.

You can find more information on xylitol and even order some products online at the following websites: www.xylitol.org, www.xlear.com, and www.carifree.com.

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