## Preventing Tooth Decay

The main cause of tooth decay and gum disease is a fine film of live bacteria, constantly growing on the tooth and gum surfaces, called *BIOFILM*. This build-up occurs largely independently of food intake, but is accelerated by sugar. Everyone has these bacteria, but some people are more susceptible to their action than others.

**Control of this biofilm growth is the essential basis for dental health.**

It is essential to achieve regular (daily) thorough removal of this biofilm in order to prevent gum disease and greatly reduce the chances of tooth decay.

It is each patient's own responsibility to remove biofilm from their teeth and moderate their sugar intake if they wish their teeth, and any fillings, crowns etc. to last. If biofilm is not removed thoroughly and regularly and you frequently consume refined sugar there will be a continuous deterioration in the health of the teeth and gums. It is important to remember that gum disease and tooth decay are the major causes of adult tooth loss and in almost every case are preventable diseases.

**Tooth decay is easily prevented if you follow this advice:**

**1. Reduce how often you consume sweet food or drinks**.

2. Brush with a fluoride toothpaste for 2 minutes every day. Use a dry tooth paste and when finished spit out but do not rinse your mouth with water.

3. Clean between your teeth with floss and/or special brushes.

4. Eat a healthy balanced diet. This should include 5 portions of fruit and vegetables and be low in refined sugar and saturated fat.

5. Have drinks with no sugar in them. If you need to sweeten tea/coffee then try *Stevia*, a natural sweetener.

6. Try to eat sweet food at meal times rather than between meals.

7. Healthy snacks include cheese, nuts and fruit, avoid sweets and mints.

8. Do not eat/drink anything sugary 1 hour before bed.