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Episode 05: Can you catch cavities from another person when you kiss them?_005

Can you “catch” a cavity from kissing another person?

Stay tuned to find out on This Old Tooth.

Hello everyone. You are listening to episode number 5 of this Old Tooth, a podcast devoted to providing you with truthful agenda free information about how you can get and keep a beautiful healthy smile for life. I am your host, Dr. Lisa Germain. Today I will be discussing whether you can get a cavity from kissing another person.

And, I hope you are sitting down. Because, the answer is yes. Cavities are just as contagious as the flu and the common cold. They can absolutely be passed on from mouth to mouth contact when you are exchanging saliva. Now, I am not talking about a quick peck on the lips. But, if you are swapping spit, you are also exchanging the cavity causing bacteria with each other.

And, do I need to remind you not to share toothbrushes? If there is even a possibility that you might be spending the night somewhere else, a tiny travel toothbrush can be discretely tucked away in a purse or a pocket.

Now, these rules apply to families, as well because research has shown that invariably spouses can pass cavities on from one person to the next. Saliva is a breeding ground for bacteria. Everyone in your family should have their own toothbrush and they should be changed frequently. The American Dental Association recommends a new toothbrush every 3-4 months or even sooner as the bristles become frayed. Bacteria from your mouth will remain on your wet toothbrush you want to avoid passing those bacteria on to other family members. You might even want to consider storing them separately instead of in one of those toothbrush holders that clusters them together.

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Also, parents, you might be shocked to know that you could actually be passing on cavities to your children at a very young age. For example, anyone with children knows how common it is to share food with them from your own plate using your spoon or fork. Likewise, parents also find themselves cleaning off their child's spoon with their own mouth or sharing a meal using the same utensils. Even if you blow on your baby's food to cool it off, you could be spreading these cavity-causing germs. Avoiding these habits can go a long way in stopping the flow of bacteria from your mouth to your child's.

Now, Parents, have you ever found yourself scooping up that dropped pacifier, washing it off in your mouth and then popping it back into your baby's mouth? Sounds pretty yucky, right? Well, I remember when I had kids how diligent I was with my first one about germs. If something got dropped, it got sterilized. By the time the second one came along, I got a bit more relaxed and the 5-second rule seemed reasonable or just wiping it off on my pants would do. I was told that by the time you have a third, it usually seems reasonable to have the dog fetch it. But, I suppose, having an extra clean one on hand or waiting until you can rinse it off with warm soapy water is certainly preferable.

Inevitably, we don't live in a sterile environment and even the most diligent among us can sometimes, well break the "rules". So one of the key actions you can take personally to not develop cavities is through regular brushing and flossing yourself. Not only will you help prevent the spread of cavities, but you'll be setting a good example of oral care for your family and friends that hopefully will be "contagious" as well!

And now for a fun fact:

A snail's mouth is no larger than the head of a pin, but it can have 25,000 teeth!

Hmm, I wonder how long it takes a snail to brush their teeth at night.

If you have any questions about your dental health, you can e-mail me at lisa@thisoldtooth.com.

And, if you have not subscribed to my podcast, I would like to encourage you to do that today.

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On my next show I will be discussing the major causes of bad breath and what you can do about them. That is an episode you really don't want to miss.

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And, Thank you so much for listening and remember, be true to your teeth, or they will be false to you.

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