

# XYLITOL FACT SHEET



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is Xylitol?**

Xylitol is a sweetener that occurs naturally. It can be found in berries, fruit, vegetables, mushrooms, and birch bark.

### **How does Xylitol differ from other sweeteners?**

Chemically speaking, xylitol is not actually a sugar, but a sugar alcohol. It differs from other sweeteners such as sorbitol, fructose and glucose because the xylitol molecule has five, instead of six, carbon atoms. Most bacteria in the mouth are unable to make use of such sugars. This is one reason why xylitol helps prevent cavities.

### **What is Xylitol's tooth friendly effect based on?**

When you take xylitol after eating, the acid attack that would otherwise last for over half an hour is stopped. Because the bacteria in the mouth causing cavities are unable to use xylitol, their growth is stopped. The number of acid-producing bacteria may fall as much as 90%.

### **How do you use Xylitol?**

Xylitol is available in a chewing gum form. You need to chew one or two sticks of gum for five minutes three times a day after meals. Chewing xylitol-sweetened gum can slow the buildup of plaque on teeth. Studies show that this program can reduce tooth decay up to 62%.

### **Is Xylitol safe?**

Xylitol is a natural carbohydrate and has been approved in virtually all industrialized countries to be used in oral hygiene products with no safety concerns.

### **What do scientific studies show?**

- Xylitol reduces the number of new cavities.
- Mothers who chew xylitol gum are less likely to transmit cavity-causing bacteria to their children.
- Regular xylitol gum-chewing may have a long-term preventative effect for cavities for several years after the chewing has ended.
- Xylitol adds to the benefits of a fluoridation program.
- Xylitol inhibits the attachment and growth of infection causing bacteria (ex. Haemophilus Influenzae)
- Xylitol reduces the occurrence of chronic ear infections in children using xylitol.