Calculus

Calculus is the hard stone like deposit on teeth formed by plaque that has calcified.

Calculus is usually strongly attached to the teeth and must be removed by an instrument. It can not be just brushed off the teeth. Subgingival calculus (below the gums) is usually darker and more adherant to the tooth than the creamy yellow supragingival calculus.

Caries (dental)/ Tooth decay

Caries or 'tooth decay' is a disease of the hard structure of the teeth caused by various bacteria in the mouth. For caries to form, the bacteria which are present in plaque need to have sugars from food, and need to be present long enough on the tooth surface to cause demineralisation i.e. to cause a reduction in the amount of, for example, calcium, in the structure of the tooth.

Once demineralisation has taken place, the bacteria can invade the tooth to deeper levels, and eventually a cavity or caries lesion may occur.

Dentists can detect the presence of caries by noticing changes in the appearance of your teeth, and by the use of light and x-rays.

This is one of the reasons why dentists recommend regular check-ups; so they can advise you if caries is forming.

When this happens, a filling is often recommended. If caries is left untreated for a longer time, and the bacteria have invaded into the middle i.e. the pulp, of the tooth, you may even need to have a root canal treatment or extraction carried out. Your will always be advised of the options on the treatment and what is most appropriate for your tooth.

You can do a lot at home to prevent caries forming in your teeth.

Brushing your teeth correctly to remove plaque with a fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between the teeth with dental floss, sticks of interdental brushes will help to reduce the amount of bacteria (plaque) on your teeth.

You can also try to reduce the amount, and the frequency of the sugars and sweet things you eat and drink, as this will also help prevent caries. It has been shown that regular brushing, the use of fluorides, and the reduction in quantity and frequency of sugar intake will all help to significantly reduce caries. If you need more information about caries and tooth decay you must ask us.