

Gummy vitamins present a sticky (dental) situation

By **KIM GLOVER, R.D.H.**

Can gummy vitamins cause cavities? I hate to ruin your day, but yes, they can — even if they are sugar-free.

Gummy vitamins are everywhere. From multivitamins to probiotics to fish oil supplements, gummies are an easy, no-argument way to get your child to take his vitamins.

The problem with gummy vitamins (and most chewables) is the acidity — Vitamin C is ascorbic acid — and the stickiness of the product.

Try this experiment: chew up a gummy vitamin then look in a mirror. You'll see gummy stuck on the tops of your teeth and between them. Swish with water and check again. Do you still see the gummy stuff stuck to the teeth?

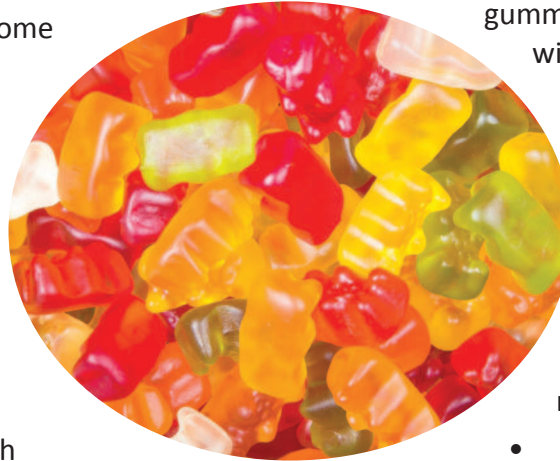
Everywhere you have gummy stuck to your teeth, acids are softening the enamel. If you were to do this every day, the softened enamel can break down and ultimately become a hole in the tooth.

Many parents are surprised to learn that sugar-free things like drinks and vitamins can still cause tooth decay. The secret is in the acidity of the product and often has nothing to do with whether it contains sugar or not.

There are ways to make these

vitamins safer for your child's teeth. For example:

- Give your child his vitamins right before a meal. Following the gummy with a meal will help clean the gummy stuff off the teeth, making it safer. And of course, have your child rinse or brush after the meal.
- Serve milk with the vitamin. This will help neutralize the acids that weaken the teeth.
- If your child is six or older, and a good spitter, have him swish a



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fluoride mouth rinse after brushing to give teeth a super-shield of protection from the acids in the vitamin.

Parents are also surprised to learn that the worst time to give a child a chewable or gummy vitamin is at bedtime. Going to bed with the acidic vitamin goo stuck to the teeth will definitely weaken the teeth and make them more cavity-prone.

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