



The nagging cough, constantly runny nose and throat so sore you can't swallow—the symptoms of a cold can make life miserable.

Fortunately, a spoonful of cold/cough syrup helps get sufferers through the day and get a good night's sleep. But did you know it could add tooth decay to your list of symptoms?

THE COMMON CURE—NOT SO GOOD FOR TEETH

Although many of us will try anything to get rid of the annoyance of a common cough or cold, we don't have to suffer through the bitter taste of yesterday's cold syrups. Now, most syrups are flavored, making them bearable to every family member.

But, along with better taste comes a variety of ingredients that can pose potential risk to your teeth. A glance at the side of the bottle reveals that most syrups contain inactive ingredients like high fructose corn syrup, citric acid and sucrose. These ingredients mix with natural bacteria in the mouth, forming acid that attacks the enamel (the hard outer layer) of your teeth. This process can eventually wear away the enamel, causing tooth decay.

The addition of alcohol in some popular cold and cough syrups also has a drying effect on the mouth. (Saliva helps naturally rinse your teeth of sugars and acids.) With less saliva present, the sugars and acids remain in the mouth even longer. Not to mention the last thing you think about when you're sick is brushing your teeth!

WHAT TO DO?

Whenever you take any medication, be sure to follow the directions on the bottle for recommended dosage. Take the syrup with a meal when more saliva is produced and rinse your mouth out well with water afterwards. Rinsing is especially important when you take a spoonful of cold syrup before going to bed. Without rinsing, the harmful liquid coats teeth throughout the night, further promoting tooth decay.

For adults, another simple option is switching to a pill form of cold medication. Though, for children who can't yet swallow pills, rinsing well after each dose is best. And always encourage good oral care for a family of healthy smiles.

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.