

Black plaque is usually hardened tartar that becomes discolored from smoking, certain foods and drinks, or blood from inflamed gums. While it is the **bacteria in the plaque and tartar** that cause cavities, the black color itself doesn't necessarily mean it is more likely to cause cavities than yellow or white tartar. **Poor dental hygiene is the main cause of both the black color and the cavities that form.** [1, 2, 3, 4]

What black plaque is

- A sticky film of bacteria, food debris, and saliva that hardens into tartar, which can be discolored by external factors.
- The dark color can be caused by:
 - **Smoking:** Chemicals from cigarette smoke can lead to black tartar.
 - **Diet:** Foods and drinks with dark pigments like coffee, red wine, and chocolate can stain tartar.
 - **Blood:** If gum disease is present, blood from inflamed gums can stain the tartar black.
 - **Chemical compounds:** The dark color can be from a compound of iron and sulfur, particularly in pediatric cases, according to [a review of the literature from the National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#). [1, 2, 3, 5]

How it causes cavities

- Plaque and tartar both contain bacteria that produce acids when they digest sugars from food. These acids erode tooth enamel, leading to tooth decay and cavities.
- The black color itself is not the cause of cavities, but the underlying bacteria and poor oral hygiene are. [1, 2, 3, 6, 7]

What to do

- **Practice good oral hygiene:** Brush your teeth for at least two minutes, twice a day, and floss daily to remove plaque before it hardens into tartar.
- **See a dentist regularly:** A dentist can professionally remove hardened tartar and identify any cavities early.
- **Limit staining foods and drinks:** Reduce your consumption of coffee, red wine, and sugary or acidic foods.
- **Avoid smoking:** Quitting smoking can help prevent discoloration and improve overall oral health. [1, 3, 8, 9, 10]

AI responses may include mistakes.

[1] <https://nhdsq.com/black-tartar-on-teeth-what-is-it-and-its-causes/>

[2] <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4354720/>

[3] <https://mytreasuredsmiles.com/black-tartar-on-teeth-should-i-be-concerned/>

[4] <https://alexandria.dental/causes-black-spots-teeth/>

[5] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25802850/>

[6] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUWNpNB8fag&pp=0gcJCfwAo7VqN5tD>

[7] <https://arnolddentistry.com/blog/fyi/the-silent-saboteur>

[8] <https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/tartar-dental-calculus-overview>

[9] <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/25102-tartar>

[10] <https://www.smiletimedentalhouston.com/black-tartar-on-teeth-symptoms-causes-and-treatment-method/>