

## **What is xylitol?**

Xylitol is a sweetener and is very similar to regular white sugar in appearance and taste. It is often presented as a ‘naturally occurring’ alcohol found in plant material, including many fruits and vegetables. There are some studies supporting the use of xylitol while others do not. It can all be very confusing!!

After much research, I decided to include xylitol as a “natural” alternative to fluoride that may help reduce cavity formation. “Habitual use of xylitol-containing food and oral hygiene adjuvants has been shown to reduce the growth of dental plaque, to interfere with the growth of caries-associated bacteria, to decrease the incidence of dental caries, and to be associated with remineralization of caries lesions” ([source](#))

I would feel safe using a toothpaste/gum/melts sweetened with xylitol but would not use it in large amounts in foods. I will continue to follow the research and post accordingly.

If you wish to read further as to why I included xylitol in my natural option section the information below will add some clarification.

## **Dental benefits of xylitol**

Cavities are bacterial infections that thrive in acidic conditions and are common when plaque is allowed to accumulate on teeth. Similar to sugar in taste, xylitol differs in a few critical ways. While sugar lowers PH, xylitol raises it. Sugar contributes to tooth demineralization whilst xylitol does the opposite; it actually aids dental remineralization. Sugar acts as a food source for harmful bacteria, yet xylitol has been shown to reduce levels of some of the worst kinds of bacteria. Despite the dental benefits, there are trade-offs associated with just about every choice we make. Understanding for yourself these trade-offs, as accurately as possible and then, making a decision, is at the heart of informed consent.

## **Concerns about xylitol**

The word “natural” means different things to different people. Some concerns about xylitol, arise from sourcing. In the past, xylitol was extracted from

birch tree bark but this proved to be expensive. Today, much xylitol is sourced from corn cobs left over from ethanol production which of course are GM0. ([source](#)). Other concerns involve the effect consumption has on human digestion. It is strange the effect that xylitol has on dogs; dogs can be seriously harmed by ingesting xylitol and although dogs ought to avoid other foods that humans enjoy other than xylitol, still, it does seem a bit puzzling why something so “natural” can pose such a threat to Fido?

### **Risk versus reward**

Similar to the ongoing debate around fluoride, xylitol and fluoride both can be looked at in terms of topical benefit or also through a lens that explores ingestion. It is safe to say that more concerns arise for both when considering ingestion verses topical benefit. Sure-- dissolving xylitol mints and candies or using xylitol toothpastes does in fact result in small amounts that are digested, but oral health care providers who utilize xylitol for their clients are not necessarily advocating xylitol as an outright sugar replacer in all cooking, baking and recipes etc.

### **Follow the money trail**

Not surprisingly, the risk to reward picture is portrayed differently by different camps. It would be foolish to not acknowledge the correlation between a camp’s position and the income derived through maintenance of that position. So we see many makers of products (including xylitol) tooting the benefits to the almost total exclusion of concerns. Our incentive is your dental health and overall wellness. We don’t want to present a slanted view or declare an undying eternal devotion for any product or treatment be xylitol or any other that is not supported scientifically.

### **Lesser of two evils**

Presently, we offer GMO free xylitol products for topical benefits only. Despite the above mentioned concerns which are valid, the difference that xylitol makes for certain families is significant. Individual variables which can make one treatment plan vastly different than another’s plan exist; no two clients are exactly alike. So—which **material do you trust more and worry**

**about less for fighting tooth decay, fluoride or xylitol?** You have the right to make individual benefit verses risk evaluations. It is your right to choose.

### **Preventing decay**

Remember, despite the propaganda, tooth decay is not the result of being deficient in fluoride or even xylitol. To the degree that individuals can actually prevent tooth decay, the health of their mouth has far more to do with nutrition, lifestyle and diligent home care.

<http://xylitol.org/about-xylitol/corn-xylitol-vs-birch-xylitol/>

<http://www.xlear.com/whats-gmo/>