



Your Child's Oral Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay is the most common childhood disease. Although mostly preventable, tooth decay can affect a child's oral health as soon as teeth develop. Tooth decay can also cause pain and interfere with a child's ability to eat, speak, smile and concentrate. Good oral health is essential to a child's overall health and well-being. Starting good oral habits now will help keep your child's teeth healthy for many years to come.

Here are some tips to help your child establish good oral health habits:

- Clean your baby's gums and mouth with a wet washcloth after eating and drinking.
- Remember, baby teeth are important. They help children speak and chew properly. Baby teeth also reserve space for permanent teeth until they begin to emerge.
- Take your child to the dentist no later than their first birthday. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that a child see a dentist after their first tooth appears, usually between six and 12 months old.
- Once teeth emerge, use a small, soft-bristled toothbrush to brush in soft, gentle circles twice a day with a small smear of fluoride toothpaste.
- To prevent "baby bottle" tooth decay, do not put a child to sleep with a bottle full of milk or juice. Instead, give your baby a bottle filled with water before nap or bed time.



- Supervise brushing until your child can brush by him or herself. Use no more than a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste and make sure children do not swallow excess toothpaste.
- Make sure your child has a balanced diet with plenty of calcium and vitamin D to increase calcium absorption. These nutrients are necessary for building strong teeth and keeping gums and mouth tissues healthy.
- Encourage your child to drink water instead of sugary or acidic beverages.
- Make sure your child wears a mouthguard when playing sports to help protect their teeth, lips, cheeks and gums from sports-related injuries.

It is essential to begin a proper oral hygiene routine early in a child's life. This will help ensure the development of strong and healthy teeth. Talk with your dentist for more expert tips on how to take care of your child's teeth at home.

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