

Children's Dental Health



A baby's first tooth usually comes through the gum between 6-9 months of age. A full set of 20 primary teeth should be present in the mouth by 3 years of age. Tooth brushing should begin when the first teeth appear. Use a small soft bristled toothbrush to gently brush your child's teeth. Later, a child can be given a toothbrush to play with at bath time to introduce the idea of brushing their own teeth. It is important that twice daily tooth brushing becomes part of a child's regular routine much like taking a bath or brushing hair. Starting early sets up good habits for life!

Make dental visits a good experience. Start regular dental visits early. This can prevent little problems from becoming big ones. Even if you are checking your child's teeth regularly, you do not have the special tools and training to see what a dental professional can. Encourage a positive attitude towards dental visits by following these tips:

- Make appointments at times when your child will not be tired
- Treat the visit as routine – don't make the visit the high point of the day
- Avoid using negative words such as drill, hurt or needle
- Answer questions honestly, if you are unsure of the answer say that you will both find out together rather than making something up.

Eating patterns are just as important as the types of food and drinks children have. The risk of tooth decay can increase if children eat too often throughout the day. Saliva is the body's natural defense against tooth decay – constantly replacing the minerals in teeth and washing away acids. To give saliva enough time to work, limit the number of times your child eats throughout the day. A general rule of thumb is to limit eating times to 3 meals and 2 snacks each day.

'Tooth Friendly' food and drink tips:

- Limit intake of acidic drinks such as colas (diet and regular), sports drinks, fruit drinks and juices, cordials – don't sip on them too long and limit how often
- Avoid putting a child to bed with a bottle containing anything other than water
- Keep healthy snacks readily for children to grab
- Avoid dipping a babies dummy into any foods or liquids.
- Drink water! (Note: not all bottled water has fluoride to help prevent tooth decay).



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