



Caring for your child's teeth

Your child's first teeth or "baby" teeth are just as important as their permanent teeth. Apart from allowing your child to chew and speak properly, they hold the correct space for the permanent teeth. Premature loss of baby teeth could lead to crowding of the adult teeth.

Dental decay in children's teeth is commonly caused by prolonged contact with sweet liquids, food acids or food with the teeth.

It is important to teach your child how to care for their teeth.

When to introduce tooth brushing

Your child's first teeth will erupt at about 4-8 months. Use a soft washer wrapped around your finger to gently clean the teeth until 9-10 months of age.

Teach them about brushing one step at a time.

Give them a small soft dry toothbrush to play with while they watch you brush your own teeth. Then, brush their teeth with water only.

Children over two can start using a small amount of children's toothpaste, which has half the amount of fluoride as adult toothpaste. It is important that you have established a good brushing routine by the time the molar teeth erupt.

You should start flossing your child's teeth as soon as the teeth are in contact with each other, usually between the ages of two and three.

Children don't have the dexterity to brush and floss properly, so supervise them until they are about 8-10 years old.



When to start visits to the dentist

Bring your child in for their first dental visit between the ages of 18 and 24 months. We will give them a ride in the chair (on your lap) and "count" their teeth.

When they are 2 or 3 years old, we can polish their teeth. Children often enjoy choosing a gift from our "reward box". Our entire team enjoys making dentist visits a positive experience for young children.

Tips to help your child avoid tooth decay

- A balanced diet and good nutrition are the keys to reducing the risk of dental decay.
- Never settle a baby to sleep with a bottle of milk, fruit juice or cordial. Instead, offer water.
- Avoid a high-sugar diet. Offer fresh fruits and vegetables, wholegrain cereals, meats, and dairy products.
- Encourage your child to drink water instead of sugary drinks. Avoid soft drinks and cordials. Even fruit juice contains a lot of sugar, so limit juice to one cup daily (diluted) at meal times only. Sipping sugary drinks all day causes severe tooth decay.
- Limit sugary snacks.
- Never put honey or sweeteners on a child's dummy.

Thumb sucking and dummies

Sucking is a natural reflex but children who continue to suck after their permanent incisors erupt risk crooked permanent teeth and a narrow palate which constricts the airway.

Rewards such as a star or sticker calendar can be effective.

Talk to your dentist if you are concerned about your child's sucking habit.

Important to know

- This page contains general information about caring for children's teeth. It cannot replace individualised advice from your dental practitioner. Please consult your dentist for specific recommendations about your oral health and necessary treatments.

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