

How can I keep my child's mouth healthy



The first visit to the dentist should be at 12 months of age. Children with dental problems caused by injury, disease, or a developmental problem should be seen by a dentist right away. Schedule regular visits every 6 months or as your dentist recommends.



Make sure your child's teeth are brushed at least twice a day using a fluoride-containing toothpaste. Up to age 6, toothpaste should contain 1000ppm of fluoride and after age 6 it should contain up to 1500ppm of fluoride.



Make sure that your family practices good dental health habits so as to reduce the risk of transferring tooth decay bacteria to your child.



Give your child healthy foods. Avoid sugary foods and drinks in between meals and at night.



Dummies should not be used after 18 months of age.

Sucking of thumbs and fingers should be discouraged.



Information compiled by the **Dental Public Health Unit**
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A Healthy Mouth for Your child

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A healthy
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your child



Teeth for Life

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Information guide for maintaining good oral health

A child's dental care begins during the mother's pregnancy, as baby teeth start forming before birth. If you are pregnant, make sure to eat a balanced, nutritious diet and take prenatal vitamins as recommended. It is important for pregnant women to have a dental check up and undergo treatment if required. Your child's first teeth usually start appearing at about 6 months of age, although the timing varies from child to child. All the 20 baby teeth should be present by age 3.

Proper dental care begins before a baby's first tooth appears.

Cleaning your child's mouth

Start cleaning your child's mouth with cotton wool or gauze from birth. You can continue to do this or use a finger brush when the first teeth appear. As more teeth erupt, use a soft toothbrush.

Use a **smear** of toothpaste up to age 2 and a **small pea-sized** amount from then onwards. Up to age 6, toothpaste should contain 1000ppm-1100ppm of fluoride and after age 6, it should contain up to 1500ppm of fluoride.



A smear of toothpaste (6 months+)



A small pea-sized amount of toothpaste (2+)



Replace the toothbrush as soon as the bristles start to look worn or every 3 months. Encourage your child to watch you brush your teeth. For the first few years, brush his/her teeth yourself, but let him/her brush too. Your child should know how to brush his/her own teeth twice a day at about age 8 but continue to supervise and check for proper cleaning. Use disclosing tablets from time to time to check your child's brushing. Disclosing tablets are chewable and will colour any deposits left on teeth after brushing. These are available at most pharmacies.



Food and drink

Encourage your baby to begin drinking from a cup at about 4 to 6 months of age.

Do not put your child to bed with a bottle of milk, formula, juice, lemonade or other products that contain sugar, as these can cause tooth decay. If your child is thirsty during the night, only give water as a drink.

Read food ingredient labels as one will find a lot of hidden sugars e.g. sucrose, glucose and fructose in ready made foods. Avoid giving your child sugary snacks.



Sugary snacks which can damage teeth:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Wafers | Lollipops |
| Flavoured Yoghurts | Squashes |
| Flavoured Milk | Sponges |
| Chocolates | Ice Creams |
| Sugary Cereals | Fizzy Drinks |
| Flavoured Water | Cakes |
| Biscuits | Dried Fruits |
| Cereal Bars | Sports Drinks |
| Fruit Juices | Ketchup |
| Mints | Sugary Chewing Gums |
| Barbecue Sauce | Hot Chocolate |
| Iced Tea | |
| Sweets | |

Give your child nutritious foods such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.

Other causes of damage to teeth

Dummies should not be used after 18 months of age.

If your child sucks his/her finger or thumb, help your child to stop. If the child can't stop, seek advice from your dentist.

If a tooth is knocked out or broken, take your child to a dentist as soon as possible. Place the tooth in milk till you get there.

Do not share spoons and forks with babies. The saliva you leave on these contains bacteria that can cause tooth decay.

