



Tips for Parents

Your Baby's Teeth

Never put your baby to bed with a bottle of milk or juice. If your baby needs a bottle to help comfort him, only add water, and take it away as soon as your baby falls asleep. Anything other than water will pool around your baby's teeth causing tooth decay or "baby bottle decay."

Be sure to thoroughly clean your infant's gums after each feeding with a water-soaked washcloth or gauze pad to stimulate the gum tissue and remove food particles.

Don't kiss your baby or allow caregivers to kiss your baby on the mouth. Doing so can pass to your child the bacteria that causes cavities among many other diseases.

If the baby's pacifier falls out on the ground, don't use your own saliva to "wash" it off.

As the baby's teeth begin to erupt, use a small, soft-bristled toothbrush, and just a smear of fluoridated toothpaste to gently brush the teeth inside and outside. You will only need a small amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Fluoride helps to inhibit tooth decay.

Wean your baby from a bottle to a cup as soon as possible.

Schedule your baby's first dental visit when teeth begin to erupt or by age one. Your oral health professional will check for cavities and for developmental problems. Starting early helps create positive experiences for future visits to come.

Your Toddler's Teeth

At age two or three, begin to teach your child proper brushing techniques ending with follow up brushing and flossing by you. Children usually don't develop the dexterity necessary to do it well enough alone until age seven or eight.

You should schedule oral health appointments every 6 months.

It is best when discussing oral health visits with your child to avoid use of the words "pain" or "hurt." These words may introduce fear.

If you are unsure if your community's water source is fluoridated, ask. Your oral health professional can discuss supplement options if necessary.

Your Pre-adolescent Child's Teeth

Even if your child appears to be brushing and flossing properly, you will need to continue supervision until your oral health professional feels your child is doing well.

Using disclosing solution or chewable tablets can help your child see where he is missing when doing his own brushing and flossing.

Continue to schedule regular oral health appointments every 6 months.

Ask your oral health professional about sealants to protect teeth against tooth decay that can form on the chewing surfaces of your child's teeth.

Ask your oral health professional to check that your child is getting enough fluoride for his teeth. Fluoride treatments may be recommended, as well as the use of a home fluoride rinse or brushing gel.

Be sure good nutrition is practiced at home and encouraged at school.

Your Adolescent's and Teen's Teeth

Gum disease can start anytime especially during adolescence. So continue practicing good nutrition and oral hygiene at home and away. Brushing after meals and regular flossing may become more difficult as schedules become busy.

If your child is wearing orthodontic appliances, be sure to ask your oral health professional about brushing methods, dental aids, and fluoride use to help keep teeth clean and healthy.

Ask your oral health professional about custom mouth guards and protectors if your child participates in sports.