

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- ◆ Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- ◆ Clean between your teeth once a day
- ◆ Eat a healthy diet and limit snacks
- ◆ Visit your dentist regularly



For more information about taking care of your teeth and gums, visit MouthHealthy.org, the ADA's website just for patients.

Your Child's Teeth from Ages 6 to 12



Children who have healthy teeth are more likely to have healthy teeth as adults. And the habits that a child learns will stick for life. That's why it's important to take good care of your child's teeth all through childhood.

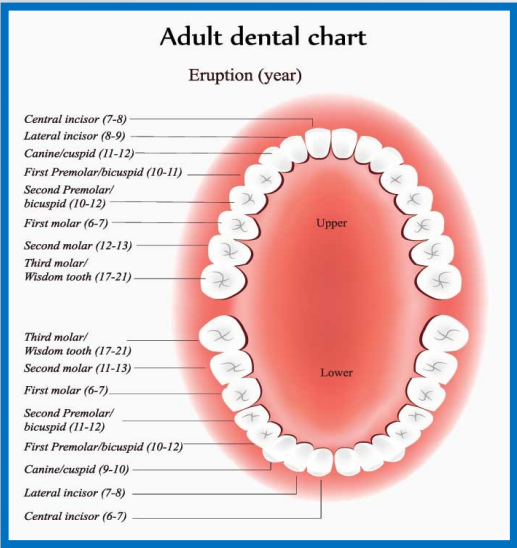
Changes to expect in your child's smile

Over time, children's baby teeth are replaced by permanent teeth. The six to twelve year old child has both baby and permanent teeth. Together, they help a child speak, smile, and talk.

At about age 5 or 6, children begin to lose their top and bottom front teeth. By about age 12, children lose the last of their 20 baby teeth.

The first adult teeth usually come in between ages 5-7 years. Your child will have a mix of baby and adult teeth for a while. By the time children are 12-14 years old, they usually have all of their permanent teeth except wisdom teeth.

The chart below gives the names of the adult teeth. It also shows when usually each tooth erupts. Not all children get all teeth at the same time, your child's teeth may come in a little sooner or later.



Diet and Your Child's Teeth

Bacteria in the mouth use the sugar in food and drinks to make acid that attacks the teeth. Each time we eat or drink, that acid can attack the teeth for 20 minutes or longer. Over time, tooth decay can develop and a cavity can form. A cavity must be treated by the dentist, it cannot repair on its own.

Frequent snacking and sipping means more acid attacks and a higher risk for tooth decay. Limit sugary snacks and drinks for your child. These drinks include fruit juices, sodas, sports and energy drinks.

Save sweets for mealtimes. If your child is thirsty or needs a snack, avoid cookies, candy, and other sweet and sticky food. Instead offer water or other healthy foods, such as carrot sticks, cheese, or fresh fruit.

Protect Teeth with Sealants

A sealant is a material that is applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth where decay occurs most often. These teeth have pits and grooves that are hard to clean because toothbrush bristles cannot reach into them. That is how decay starts in the pits and the grooves and a cavity forms. The sealant flows into the pits and the grooves, bonds to the tooth, and protects it from bacteria and acid attacks. Sealants can be applied quickly and painlessly. When teeth are treated with sealants, they are less likely to get cavities.



Natural Tooth



Sealed Tooth

Brushing Tips

Cleaning your child’s teeth is an important step to prevent cavities. Brush your child’s teeth yourself until he or she has the skills to do it properly themselves. If your child cannot tie their shoelaces, they are probably not ready to brush themselves and you should continue to supervise.

Teeth should be brushed morning and night for at least two minutes each time. When your child is old enough, watch to make sure they are not “rushing the brushing”.



For brushing, use a child-sized brush with soft bristles and a pea-amount of toothpaste. Place the toothbrush against the tooth at an angle. Move the brush back-and-forth gently in tooth-wide strokes brushing the inner, outer, and chewing surface of all teeth. Finally brush the tongue.

Make choosing a toothbrush a fun activity for you and your child. Let your child pick the color and design. You can also ask your dentist if a powered toothbrush is right for your child’s needs.

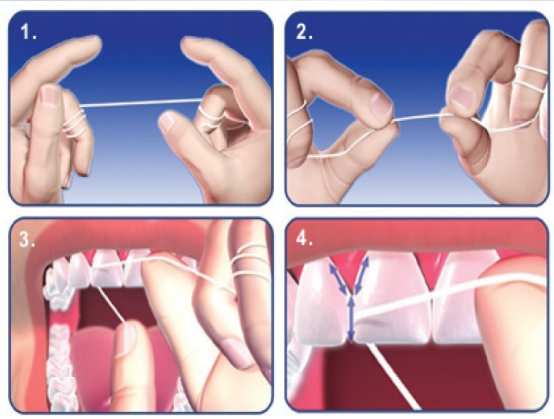


Flossing Tips

Flossing is an important part of cleaning teeth. Your dentist and hygienist can show you and your child how to floss correctly. Flossing once a day removes plaque (a sticky film of bacteria) from between the teeth where toothbrush bristles cannot reach.

Flossing is not easy for children to do by themselves. The American Dental Association recommends that you floss your child’s teeth until they can do it themselves, around 10 or 11 years.

- Use about 18 inches of floss. Wind it between the index fingers. Hold the floss between the thumbs and index fingers. Use a back-and-forth motion to slide the floss between teeth.
- Curve the floss into a C-shape and guide it into the space between the gum and tooth until you feel resistance. Gently rub the floss on the sides of the teeth.
- Repeat these steps for the rest of the teeth . Don’t forget the back side of the last tooth in each corner of the mouth.



As your child gets older and starts taking care of their own teeth, make sure they brush and floss daily. Look for oral care products that have the ADA Seal of Acceptance which tells you that they meet standards for effectiveness.



Fluoride— Nature’s Cavity Fighter

Fluoride is a mineral that is added to many water sources. It helps make teeth stronger and protects them from decay because it penetrates the tooth enamel making it harder and more resistant. Children who drink tap water with the right amount of fluoride are less likely to get cavities.

Children can get extra protection from fluoride if they get it from more than one source. Fluoride can be found in some toothpastes, mouth rinses, and treatments applied in the dental office.

Talk to your dentist about your child’s fluoride needs. Be sure to let him know whether you use bottled water or tap water, as bottled water as no added fluoride.

Braces and Bad Bites

A bad bite is when the teeth are crowded, crooked, or out of line. Or when the jaws don’t meet properly. A bad bite is often noticed between 6 and 12 years, when the permanent teeth come in.

Problems that can be caused by a bad bite

- It’s more difficult to keep tooth and gums clean, which can lead to tooth decay and gum disease.
- Crooked and crowded teeth can keep the jaws from developing normally.
- A very bad bite may keep a person from eating and speaking normally.
- Teeth that are out of line may get worn down or damaged more easily.
- A bad bite or crooked teeth may make children feel less confident about their looks.

Early treatment may help prevent a bad bite or make it less severe. By the time your child is 7 years old, it’s a good idea to have the dentist check your child’s bite. If your child needs orthodontic treatment, it usually starts between 8 and 14 years.

Prevent Sports Related Dental Injuries

Sports-related dental injuries can be prevented by wearing a properly fitted mouth guard. Mouth guards cushion impacts that could cause broken teeth, jaw injuries, or cuts to the lip and tongue.

Mouth guards are most often used in contact sports like boxing, football, hockey, and lacrosse. But even in non-contact sports like gymnastics or skateboarding, mouth guards can help prevent mouth and jaw injuries. Your dentist can make a comfortable mouth guard. Since treating a sports-related dental injury is very expensive, this is money well-spent.



A Healthy Smile for Life

By following the tips in this brochure, you can help your child avoid decay and disease. Ask your dentist if you have questions about your child’s teeth. Keep up with preventative dental visits. Don’t wait to take your child to a dentist until pain or a dental emergency happens. Regular dental exams and professional cleanings can help your child have a lifetime of healthy smiles.