

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 Birth to Age 6



To give your child a healthy start in life, it's important to take care of his or her teeth and gums. That's because if dental disease is not treated, it can cause serious health problems. These are some tips to help keep your child's smile healthy.

Baby's First Teeth

Your child's baby (primary) teeth are important. These teeth help your child chew and speak normally. Baby teeth also hold space in the jaw for the adult (permanent) teeth that come in later in life. A baby's teeth start to come in (erupt) when a child is 6 months old. By age 3, most children have a full set of 20 baby teeth. Baby teeth will later be shed as your child grows. This is to make room for the adult teeth to come in, beginning around age 6. By the time children are teenagers, they usually have all of their adult teeth. The last molars (wisdom teeth) erupt between 17-21 years and sometimes need to be removed if the jaw does not have enough space

Tooth Development Chart

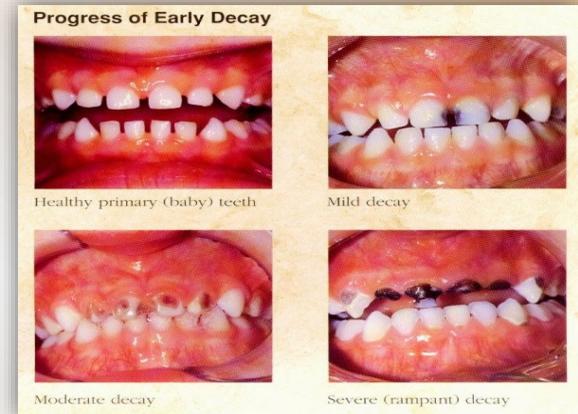
The chart below gives the names of the teeth and shows the times when they come in and are lost. Children don't get all the teeth at the same time, timings can vary and teeth can erupt earlier or later.

Primary teeth	Erupt	Shed
Upper teeth		
Central incisor	8-12 mos.	6-7 yrs.
Lateral incisor	9-13 mos.	7-8 yrs.
Canine (cuspid)	16-22 mos.	10-12 yrs.
First molar	13-19 mos.	9-11 yrs.
Second molar	25-33 mos.	10-12 yrs.
Lower teeth		
Second molar	23-31 mos.	10-12 yrs.
First molar	14-18 mos.	9-11 yrs.
Canine (cuspid)	17-23 mos.	9-12 yrs.
Lateral incisor	10-16 mos.	7-8 yrs.
Central incisor	6-10 mos.	6-7 yrs.

Prevent Cavities

Tooth decay can begin as soon as a baby's tooth come in. Decay in baby teeth cause pain. If decay is not treated, it can destroy baby teeth and lead to tooth removal. An abscess from an untreated tooth can cause serious infections. and children with tooth decay can have trouble eating so they don't get enough vitamins and minerals to grow up healthy.

When plaque on teeth (a sticky film of bacteria and food) uses the sugar in food and drink, it forms acid. Each time a child eats and drinks, that acid can attack the teeth for 20 minutes or longer. These attacks weaken the tooth enamel. Over time, tooth decay can develop and a cavity can form.



To keep your child's teeth healthy and cavity free, follow these tips.

- Clean your child's teeth daily.
- Never put your child to bed with a bottle or use it as a frequent pacifier.
- If your child uses a pacifier, do not dip it in sugar, honey, or other foods.
- Do not put pacifiers or spoons in your mouth before giving it to your child as bacteria can be spread.
- Training cups should only be used for a short time. Once the child has learned how to sip, it is no longer needed.
- Do not let your child sip sugary liquids including juice often, or snack too frequently

Cleaning your child's teeth

Cleaning your child's teeth is an important step to prevent cavities. Before your baby has teeth, wipe the baby's gums after each feeding with a damp gauze or washcloth. This removes plaque and bits of food.



When your child's teeth begin to come in, start brushing them twice a day, morning and night, using a child-size brush with soft bristles. For children under 3, use only a smear of toothpaste. For children 3-6, use a pea size amount of toothpaste. Don't give the child extra toothpaste and after brushing, teach your child to spit out the toothpaste rather than swallowing it.



The American Dental Association recommends that you brush your child's teeth until they are about 6. When your child is old enough to do the brushing, make sure to watch that they are not "rushing the brushing". Your child should brush twice a day for two minutes, and floss too.



Teething Tips

As teeth begin to come in, some babies may have sore or tender gums. To help your baby feel better, you can

- Gently rub your child's gum with a finger, wet gauze or small cool spoon.
- Give a chilled teething ring. Do not dip it in honey, sugar, syrup, or other food.
- Talk to your child's dentist if your child is still cranky or uncomfortable.

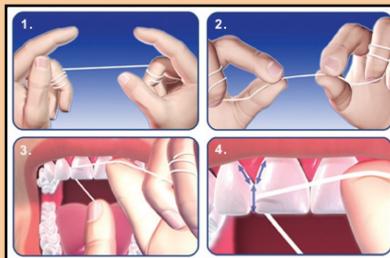
Tips for proper brushing

- Position your child so that you can see into the mouth easily. You might want to sit, resting the head in your lap.
- Place the toothbrush against the gum line at a 45-degree angle.
- Move the brush back and forth gently in short, tooth-wide strokes. Brush the outer surfaces of each tooth, plus the inside surfaces and the chewing surfaces of the teeth.
- Finish by brushing the tongue to help freshen breath and remove bacteria.
- Begin using floss when the child has 2 teeth that touch. Flossing removes plaque between teeth.



Tips for proper flossing

- 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.
- Flossing is not easy and you should do it for your child until they can do it alone, usually 10 years.



Fluoride

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, and breast milk or formula mixed with water, as bottled water has no added fluoride.

Sucking Habits

Many babies and children like to suck on thumbs, fingers, and pacifiers. Sucking is a natural reflex that may make them feel happy, safe, and relaxed. However, long term sucking habits can cause problems with tooth alignment and the proper growth of the mouth.

Sucking habits usually stop between the ages of 2 and 4. If your child uses a pacifier or sucks his fingers, talk to your dentist about weaning from this habit. Pacifiers should not be used after age 2 and finger sucking should ideally stop by age 4.

Age 1 Dental Visit

Talk to your dentist about planning your child's first dental visit. It is helpful to have the first visit when the first tooth appears and no later than the first birthday. This first visit is a "well-baby" checkup for your child's teeth. It is best to meet the dentist when the child is having any dental problems, rather than waiting for an emergency to develop. At this first visit, the dentist

- can learn about the child's health history.
- do a complete oral exam to check for growth and development, injuries, and cavities.
- will tell if the child is at risk for tooth decay
- will clean the teeth and discuss tips for oral care
- can find out if the child is getting the right amount of fluoride.
- can talk about common dental injuries, how to prevent them, and what to do if something happens.
- can offer advice on child's diet and pacifier use
- will discuss decay prevention steps and any needed treatment.

Children learn healthy habits from their parents and caregivers. You can help your child by cleaning their teeth daily, taking them to the dentist regularly, and giving them healthy foods. Teaching children good dental care early is a great way to set healthy habits for a lifetime.