

HEALTHY DENTAL HABITS

Developing good dental health habits with your child early on and practicing them daily will help your child's smile and overall health. Baby teeth are not just placeholders. They are important and need to be protected. Take a look at the tips below to help your child have healthy teeth.



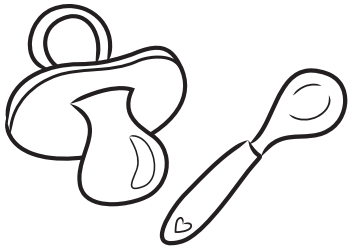
CHOOSE HEALTHY DRINKS

Breastfeed your baby until at least six months of age, if possible. Then fill your baby's bottle with formula, milk, or water. Don't put sugary drinks or juice in your child's bottle.



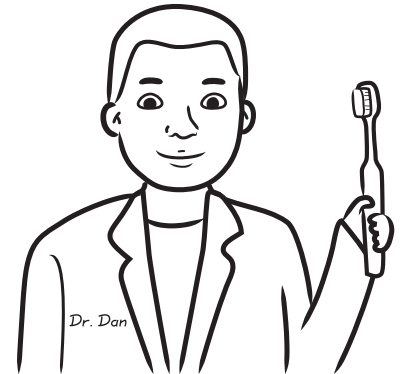
FINISH BOTTLES BEFORE BED

Finish bottle feedings before putting your baby down to sleep. Wipe baby's gums after each feeding.



DO NOT PASS ALONG GERMS

Do not put pacifiers or feeding spoons in your mouth—you can pass cavity-causing germs to your child. Rinse pacifiers with water to clean them.



SEE THE DENTIST

Take your child to the dentist for a first checkup after the first tooth appears or by the time your child turns 1.

CLEANING GUMS AND TEETH STARTS AT BIRTH

- ▶ **BIRTH TO 1ST TOOTH** Gently wipe baby's gums with a clean, damp, soft washcloth or gauze after each feeding.
- ▶ **1ST TOOTH TO 3 YEARS OLD** Brush your child's teeth two times a day (morning and night). Use a baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice.
- ▶ **3 TO 5 YEARS OLD** Brush your child's teeth for two minutes, two times a day. Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste on a child's toothbrush. Make it a fun activity—sing a silly song or make a game out of it using a timer.
- ▶ Supervise brushing until your child can spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it, around age 6.

Contact your child's dentist or pediatrician if you have questions about your child's dental health or teething, and ask about fluoride varnish for your child's teeth.



American Dental Association®



TINY SMILES

Baby teeth are important. They help your child chew, speak, and smile. They also help permanent teeth grow in the correct position. Did you know that children can get cavities as soon as their teeth first appear? Nearly one in four children ages 2–5 has cavities in their baby teeth.¹ Cavities can hurt. Cavities also can cause children to have problems eating, speaking, learning, playing, and sleeping. Children learn healthy habits from their parents and caregivers. Read below to find out how you can help prevent cavities and promote healthy habits.

HELP PREVENT CAVITIES

DURING PREGNANCY



- ▶ Children's teeth begin to develop between the third and sixth months of pregnancy. To help baby teeth develop correctly, be sure to get plenty of nutrients and eat a balanced diet. For tips on how to eat a balanced diet, visit choosemyplate.gov.

▶ It is important to go to the dentist during pregnancy. Also, remember to brush your teeth two times a day for two minutes, clean between teeth, and drink water with fluoride to help keep your own teeth and gums healthy and strong.

BIRTH to 1ST TOOTH (around 6 months)



- ▶ Gently wipe baby's gums with a clean, damp, soft washcloth or gauze after each feeding.
- ▶ Breastfeed your baby for at least the first six months of life, if possible. To help prevent tooth decay, fill your baby's bottle only with formula or milk. Finish bottle feedings before putting your baby to bed.

▶ You can pass cavity-causing germs to your child, so don't put your baby's pacifier in your mouth to clean it. And don't share feeding spoons. Rinse pacifiers with water to clean them.

▶ Don't dip pacifiers in sugar, honey, or other foods.

1ST TOOTH to 3 YEARS OLD



- ▶ Take your child to the dentist for a first checkup after the first tooth appears or by the time your child turns 1.
- ▶ Brush your child's teeth two times a day (morning and night). Use a baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice. Start cleaning between teeth daily as soon as your child has two teeth that touch.

▶ Protect your child's teeth with fluoride. Talk to your dentist or pediatrician about your child's fluoride needs.

▶ Sippy cups should be used only until around your child's first birthday. Do not let your child sip drinks with sugar all day.

3 to 5 YEARS OLD



- ▶ Brush your child's teeth for two minutes, two times a day. Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste and a small, soft toothbrush. Take turns—brush your child's teeth one time and then have them do it the next time. Supervise brushing until your child can spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it, around age 6.

▶ Clean between their teeth daily—for example, with dental floss.

▶ Encourage your child to eat fruits, vegetables, and foods that are low in sugar and to drink fluoridated water. Limit snacks, candy, juice, soft drinks, and sticky treats.

▶ Ask your child's dentist or doctor about putting fluoride varnish on your child's teeth to prevent cavities.

Visit MouthHealthy.org for more tips from the American Dental Association to help your child have their best smile!

¹ Dye BA, Thornton-Evans G, Li X, Iafolla TJ. Dental caries and sealant prevalence in children and adolescents in the United States, 2011–2012. NCHS data brief, no 191. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2015. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db191.pdf>

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TINY SMILES

BABY TEETH ARE IMPORTANT

BIRTH to 1ST TOOTH (around 6 months)

Your baby's first smile appears even before you see the first tooth—it's all about the gums at this stage.

BEST SMILE TIP!

Gently wipe baby's gums with a clean, damp, soft washcloth or gauze after each feeding. This removes bacteria and bits of food.

HEALTHY HABITS

You can pass cavity-causing germs to your baby, so don't put their pacifier in your mouth to clean it. And don't share feeding spoons. To clean pacifiers, rinse them with water. Never dip pacifiers in sugar, honey, or other foods.

1ST TOOTH to 3 YEARS OLD

Starting around 6 months and up until about 12 to 14 months, your baby's first tooth will push through the gums.

BEST SMILE TIP!

Once your child's teeth begin to show, brush them two times a day (morning and night). Use a baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice. Start cleaning between teeth daily as soon as your child has two teeth that touch.

HEALTHY HABITS

Take your child to the dentist for a first checkup after the first tooth appears or by the time your child turns 1. Do not let your child sip drinks with sugar all day.

3 to 5 YEARS OLD

By age 3, your child will have about 20 teeth. These baby teeth are important. They help your child eat, speak, and smile. They also hold space for permanent teeth.

BEST SMILE TIP!

Brush your child's teeth for two minutes, two times a day. Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste on a child's toothbrush. Assist with brushing until your child can spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it, usually around age 6. Keep cleaning between their teeth daily, for example, with dental floss.

HEALTHY HABITS

Encourage your child to eat fruits, vegetables, and foods that are low in sugar. Limit snacks, candy, juice, soft drinks, and sticky treats. And remember, water with fluoride is the best drink for your child's teeth.



Keep smiles strong at every age and every stage. Find a dentist, download brushing calendars, and get more advice for tiny teeth at MouthHealthy.org.