

HOW DO I CARE FOR MY CHILD'S TEETH?

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Good oral care begins before a baby's first tooth

Babies are born with all their teeth. You can't see them because they are hidden in the gums. Baby teeth start to break through the gums around 6 months. But it is important to start good oral care even before the first tooth comes in. From healthy gums come healthy teeth.

Kids have all their baby teeth by age 3. These are called **primary** teeth. Baby teeth start falling out around age 6; that's when the **permanent**, or adult, teeth start coming in. Gaps between baby teeth are normal. They make room for the permanent teeth. Most permanent teeth come in by age 13.

Bottle Tooth Decay is a serious problem

Bottle Tooth Decay can happen if babies take cariogenic drinks out of bottles over long periods of time.

To avoid it:

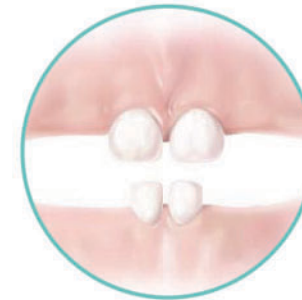
- Take the bottle away after your baby is done drinking
- Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle



Here are some tips to keep kids' teeth healthy and strong

0 - 6 months

- Wipe gums with a washcloth after feeding. This will help get rid of the sticky coating called plaque that can cause tooth decay
- Brush teeth twice a day with water and a soft-bristle toothbrush
- Schedule first dental appointment before first birthday



6 months - 2 years

- Start using 500 ppm fluoride toothpaste twice a day
 - Use only a pea-sized amount. Make sure your child spits it out after brushing
- Start visiting your dental team every 6 months





2 - 6 years

- Use 1,000 ppm fluoride toothpaste twice a day
 - Use only a pea-sized amount

- Try to break thumb-sucking and pacifier habits by age 4
- Let your child know that it's normal for baby teeth to fall out. That's how "grown-up" teeth come in
- Until children are able to practice proper oral health habits alone, parents should help their child brush twice a day

6 years and above

- Use 1450 ppm (adult) fluoride toothpaste twice a day
- Always pay special attention to the back teeth, which may have more plaque
- Children who play sports should wear a mouthguard to protect their smile



Teens

- Parents can make the most of their teens' interest in how they look by reminding them that a healthy smile and fresh breath will help them look and feel their best.

Tips for children who wear braces

- Encourage them to brush and floss thoroughly
 - How teeth look when braces come off depends on how they're treated while the braces are on
- Suggest that teens carry a toothbrush, toothpaste, and floss in their purse or gym bag for use during the day



Quick tips for better oral health for kids

- Start practicing good oral care even before the first tooth comes in. From healthy gums come healthy teeth
- Parents should schedule their child's first dental appointment before the first birthday and every 6 months starting at age 3
- It is important that children brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and begin flossing as soon as two teeth touch
- Children should limit sugary and sticky foods and drinks to protect against tooth decay

For more oral care tips for kids, talk to your dental team.