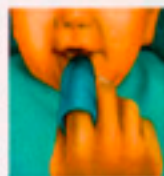


Get a Head Start on Preventing Cavities

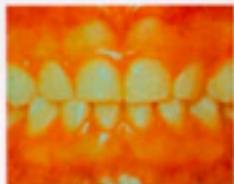
1 KEEP TEETH CLEAN

- ▶ Even before your baby's first tooth comes in, wipe his or her gums with a wet cloth after each feeding to remove excess food and bacteria.
- ▶ After teeth erupt, use a soft-bristled brush and warm water to clean the teeth.
- ▶ By age 3 children should be brushing their own teeth with adult supervision. Make sure they use just a pea-sized dot of toothpaste. Start flossing your child's teeth daily when all the primary teeth are in or when teeth are touching each other.
- ▶ By age 8 children are usually old enough to brush and floss by themselves with only occasional checks.
- ▶ Make brushing and flossing a daily routine, but keep it enjoyable. Try brushing with your child or letting him or her use a colorful toothbrush.

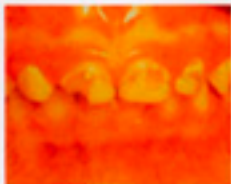


2 AVOID BABY-BOTTLE TOOTH DECAY

Baby-bottle tooth decay can occur when an infant is given a bottle filled with milk, formula, or fruit juice at bedtime, naptime, or for long periods during the day. Extended exposure to the sugar in these liquids can cause teeth to discolor and decay. Since breast milk contains sugar, decay also can occur when a baby falls asleep while breastfeeding. To prevent damage, clean your child's teeth after each feeding, and if necessary, give him or her a bottle filled only with water at bedtime or naptime.



Healthy teeth



Moderate decay

3 START DENTAL VISITS EARLY

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that your child see a dentist by his or her first birthday. Your dentist may advise waiting longer but will probably want to see the child before all his teeth have come in.

On the first visit the dentist will

- ▶ check the child's teeth for decay and signs of early developmental problems
- ▶ answer questions and explain how to care for the child's teeth.

Most children should see a dentist every six months. Encourage a positive attitude toward visits by following these tips:

- ▶ Play dentist to familiarize your youngster with what will happen.
- ▶ Take your children with you when you go in for a checkup so that they can get used to the environment and meet the staff.
- ▶ Avoid negative words like *hurt* or *bad*.
- ▶ Answer questions honestly but not too specifically. Dental professionals have special ways of explaining things to children.

4 ENCOURAGE HEALTHFUL EATING

A balanced diet is important for healthy teeth and gums. Children especially need calcium, which helps build strong teeth; some good sources are milk, cheese, and yogurt. (Research also shows that eating cheese after meals seems to inhibit the effects of decay-causing acids.) Discourage sugary or starchy snacks.

5 ASK ABOUT SEALANTS

When a child's first permanent molars erupt, usually at age 6, consider protecting them with dental sealants. A sealant is a thin plastic coating applied by your dentist to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. By filling in the teeth's grooves, sealants create a barrier against food and bacteria that cause decay. They are nearly 100 percent effective in preventing decay in back teeth.



The molars are etched with an acidic solution to help the sealant adhere. The sealant—which can be milky white or colorless—is then applied and hardened with a bonding light.

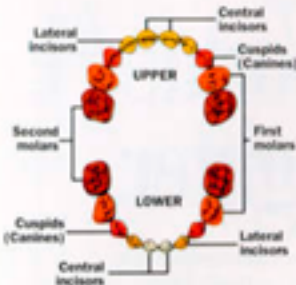
6 GET ENOUGH FLUORIDE

Fluoride helps fight cavities. Your dentist can tell whether your children are getting enough.

- ▶ To find out whether your drinking water contains fluoride, contact your local water company or health department.
- ▶ Other sources include fluoride toothpastes and rinses, professional treatments, or prescription tablets, drops, or gels.

TOOTH DEVELOPMENT

When do primary (baby) teeth usually appear?



- 6-10 months
- 8-13 months
- 10-16 months
- 13-19 months
- 16-23 months
- 23-33 months

When do permanent teeth usually appear?



- 6-8 years
- 7-9 years
- 9-12 years
- 11-13 years
- 17-21 years