

# Keeping Your Child's Healthy Smile!

**Clean teeth are less likely to get cavities. Cavities can happen when starchy and sugary foods stay on and between teeth. Plaque with bacteria sticks there, too. The longer the bacteria stay there, the greater the chance for decay.**

## Begin tooth care early

- **Before teeth appear:** clean gums with a damp cloth.
- **When teeth appear:** brush with a soft child's toothbrush.
- **When two teeth appear by each other:** gently floss.
- **When your child is two or three:** start teaching your child to brush with toothpaste. Stay with him or her.
- **Every 3 months to a year:** have your child's teeth checked by your child's dentist. Decide together on a schedule for check ups. Ask about a fluoride supplement or about dental sealants, too.

## Make good dental care a family habit!

- Brush at least two times a day. Brush after sugary or starchy snacks, too.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride.
- Floss every day.
- Get regular dental check-ups. **Keep the name and phone number of your child's dentist here:**

## Help your child learn good tooth-brushing habits.

- Care for your own teeth properly. Your child will probably do what you do.
- Encourage your child to hum the *Alphabet Song*. When the song is done, teeth might be clean!
- Get a safe stepping stool. Your child needs to reach the sink, the toothbrush, and the toothpaste.

## Make food and drink choices for healthy teeth

- Food that stays on your teeth longer can increase decay. Eat sticky foods, such as dried fruit and hard candy, less often.
- Eating some foods frequently increases decay. Limit sweets, starchy foods, juice, and sweetened drinks.
- Lowfat or fat-free milk, cheese, and meat in your meals and snacks help protect your teeth from decay. For snacks:
  - Eat lowfat cheese with fruit or vegetables.
  - Drink fat-free milk with whole-grain crackers, cookies, or cereal.



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Your child's smile is probably one of the joys of your day!

It's not too early to teach your child how to keep teeth clean and healthy. Healthy teeth:

- Help your child chew and enjoy food.
- Help build self-esteem.
- Bring healthy smiles!

## Brush, Brush!

Show your child how to brush teeth. Sit low so your child can see what you do.

- Put a pea-sized dab of toothpaste on your own toothbrush.
- Hold the brush on an angle next to your teeth.
- Gently brush your teeth on:
  - The outer surfaces, which you can see.
  - The inner surfaces where you can not see.
  - The tops where you chew.
- Gently brush the top of your tongue and inside your cheeks, too.
- Spit out the toothpaste. Rinse your mouth with water.

Now give your child a turn to brush! Offer a mirror and a different soft toothbrush.

**How well did you brush?** Find out! Mix food coloring and water in a cup. Then swish it around your mouth. Wherever color sticks to your teeth, brush more. Plaque and food particles still hide there!

