

Healthy mouth, healthy child

Caring for children's oral health should start as early as a mother's pregnancy, as an expectant mother's oral health may have an impact on the health of her baby.

Parents/caregivers can help keep newborns' and infants' mouths healthy by lightly massaging their gums with a damp washcloth. When teeth appear, lightly brush with a child-size toothbrush without any toothpaste. Around a child's first birthday, it is important to have his or her first dental visit for an oral exam.

When children reach toddler/preschool age, help brush their teeth with a small amount of toothpaste and floss in between teeth once they grow in next to each other. School aged children should brush at least twice a day for at least two minutes at a time, continue flossing and use a mouth rinse.

There are several other ways to care for a child's oral health. Make sure children wear a mouth guard during sports, practice good eating habits and continue with regular visits to the dentist for checkups.



Did you know?

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at least twice a day for
at least two minutes at a time.*



Quick bites

Additional tips for your child's oral health:

- **Prevent baby bottle decay.** Never let a child fall asleep with a bottle, unless it contains water. Sugary liquids can speed up decay in the mouth.
- **Reduce the risk of spreading germs.** Never share feeding utensils with a child or clean a baby's pacifier with anything other than warm, soapy water.
- **Monitor use of pacifiers and thumb sucking.** If thumb sucking or pacifier use continues after age 4, it can alter a child's teeth and jaw development. It can also result in an overbite or teeth that come in crooked.
- **Help establish good oral health habits.** Let children brush and floss with supervision and assistance until they can safely do so by themselves—generally around age 7.



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