

# Getting Started With Your Child's Oral Health, A Patient's Guide



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# Introducing Your Child To Oral Care

For most toddlers, getting them to brush their teeth should not be a chore. In fact, with the right approach starting as soon as the first tooth peeks through the gum line, your child will become enthusiastic participants in learning and practicing good oral health habits – for life.

## Get Long-Term Results

The greatest way for your child to develop healthy dental habits is to learn from a good example. If you have a positive attitude about dental health, so will your child.

Getting started early is easier than waiting for the “first” dentist appointment. Once your child's teeth begin coming in, you can begin cleaning them by wiping them with a moist washcloth. As your child gets more teeth, begin using a soft child's toothbrush. **IMPORTANT:** Choose a non-fluoride toothpaste until your child is able to spit it out. At the age of two or three (or when your child is able to spit out), you can begin with fluoridated toothpaste, using only a pea-sized amount.

Children's hands and mouths are different than those of adults. Children should use toothbrushes designed for their smaller and more sensitive anatomies. Both adults and children should use brushes with soft, rounded bristles for gentle cleaning. Change to a new brush about every three months.

Some suggestions for making tooth brushing less of a battle can include:

- Letting your child pick out a few toothbrushes with their favourite characters and giving them a choice of which one they want to use each time.
- Brush your own teeth while letting your child observe.
- Let your child brush their own teeth first and you brush after.
- Read some children's books about tooth brushing.
- Continue to encourage healthy habits even if your child is resistant.



## Steps to obtain good dental habits:

- Clean your child's teeth
- Allow your child's teeth to benefit from fluoride
- Limit snacks high in sugar
- Take your child to visit a dental health professional regularly

### Fluorides

Fluoride makes tooth enamel stronger and less likely to decay. It is a naturally occurring mineral found in many food and water supplies.

### At Home - Brush with a Fluoride Toothpaste

Parents must supervise the use of toothpaste so the child learns to spit out the excess. Ask your dental health professional if and when your child should use fluoride toothpaste.

### At the Dentist – Topical Fluoride and Rinses

Have topical fluoride applied to your child's teeth. These applications are available from your dental health professional.

Ask your dental health professional about a fluoride rinse. Children over six years of age and at risk for cavities may benefit from a fluoride rinse.

For younger children who are at risk for cavities a fluoride varnish may be professionally applied instead.

## Tips For Cleaning & Flossing Young Teeth

*Clean your child's teeth at least once a day*

### Brushing Tips:

- We recommend that you brush your child's teeth for two minutes twice a day.
- Bedtime is the most important time to brush for cavity prevention.
- Use a manual or power toothbrush with soft bristles.
- Hold the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the teeth. Point the bristles to where the gums and teeth meet.
- Move the brush in small circular motions over the teeth and gums.
- Brush the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of the teeth.
- Gently brush the tongue to remove germs and give the mouth a fresh feel.

### Flossing Tips:

- We recommend flossing at least once a day to clean between the teeth and under gums; start when any two teeth touch and you are not able to brush between them.
- Take a piece of floss about 45cm (18 inches) long and wrap it around the middle finger of each hand until you have no more than 2.5 cm (1 inch) in length between them.
- With the thumb and index finger of each hand, guide the floss between each tooth using a back and forth motion until the floss reaches the gum line.
- Curve the floss into a C shape around each tooth and slip it under the gum line.
- Slide up and down the side of the tooth.
- Move the floss to the side of the next tooth and repeat.



### Should My Child Always Brush Right Before Bed?

Yes. If you don't get rid of the germs (bacteria) and sugars that cause cavities, they have all night to do their dirty work. Plus, when your child is asleep, he or she does not produce as much spit (or saliva). Saliva helps keep the mouth clean. So brushing at bedtime is very important.

### Gum Disease

While many people believe periodontal disease as an adult problem, studies indicate that gingivitis (the first stage of periodontal disease) is nearly a universal problem among children and adolescents. Advanced forms of periodontal disease are rarer in children than adults, but can occur.

Chronic gingivitis is common in children. It can cause gum tissue to swell, turn red and bleed easily. Gingivitis is preventable and treatable with a regular routine of brushing, flossing and professional dental care. If left untreated, it can eventually advance to more serious forms of periodontal disease.

## Prevention Tips For Children

### Infants

Infants should be seen by a dentist after the child's first birthday. By this time, the baby's first teeth, or primary teeth, are beginning to erupt and it is a critical time to spot any problems before they become big concerns.

Conditions like gum irritation and thumb-sucking could create problems later on. Babies who suck their thumbs may be setting the stage for malformed teeth and bite relationships.

Another problem that can be spotted early is a condition called "baby bottle tooth decay," which is caused by sugary substances in breast milk, formula, and some juices, which when left on the teeth can lead to premature decay of your baby's primary teeth, which can later hamper the proper formation of permanent teeth.

One of the best ways to avoid baby bottle tooth decay is to not allow your baby to nurse on a bottle while going to sleep. Avoid dipping pacifiers in sweet substances such as honey, because this only encourages early decay in the baby's mouth. Encouraging your young child to drink from a cup as early as possible will also help stave off the problems associated with baby bottle tooth decay.

### Teething, Pacifiers and Thumb-Sucking

Teething is a time when your child's gums are sore. This is perfectly normal. You can help relieve this by allowing the baby to suck on a teething ring, or gently rubbing your baby's gums with the back of a small spoon, a piece of wet gauze, or even your finger.

For babies under the age of 3, teething rings and pacifiers can be safely used to facilitate the child's oral needs for relieving gum pain and for suckling. After the age of 3, pacifiers are generally discouraged because they may interfere with the development of your child's teeth.

Moreover, thumb-sucking should be strongly discouraged because it can lead to malformed teeth that become crooked and crowded.

## Primary and Permanent Teeth

Every child grows 20 primary teeth, usually by the age of 3. These teeth are gradually replaced by the age of 12 or so with a full set of 28 permanent teeth, and later on, four molars called "wisdom teeth."



By about three years, all 20 primary (baby) teeth will have appeared



Children can start losing their primary teeth at six years old and continue to lose them until they are 12 years old.

## Toothaches

Toothaches can be common in young children. Sometimes, toothaches are confused with erupting teeth, but the presence of pain could also indicate a serious problem.

You can safely relieve a small child's dental pain without the aid of medication by rinsing the mouth with a solution of warm water and table salt. If the pain doesn't subside, acetaminophen may be used. If such medications don't help, contact your dentist immediately.



## Injuries

You can help your child prevent oral injuries by closely supervising him during play and not allowing the child to put foreign objects in the mouth.

For younger children involved in physical activities and sports, mouth guards are strongly encouraged, and can prevent a whole host of injuries to the teeth, gums, lips and other oral structures.

Mouth guards are generally small plastic appliances that safely fit around your child's teeth. Many mouth guards are soft and pliable, and mold to the child's teeth when inserted.

If a permanent tooth has been knocked out, try to place the tooth back in its socket while waiting to see our office. Remember to hold the dislocated tooth by the crown—not the root. If you cannot relocate the tooth, place it in a container of cold milk, saline, or the child's own saliva. Place the tooth in the solution.

First, rinse the mouth of any blood or other debris and place a cold cloth or compress on the cheek near the injury. This will keep down swelling.

For a fractured tooth, it is best to rinse with warm water and again, apply a cold pack or compress. Ibuprofen may be used to help keep down swelling.

If the tooth fracture is minor, the tooth can be smoothed or if necessary, restored by the dentist if the pulp is not severely damaged.

If a child's primary tooth has been loosened by an injury or an emerging permanent tooth, the child may be able to wiggle it out on their own; in some cases, the tooth will easily separate from the gum.

Irritation caused by retainers or braces can sometimes be relieved by placing a tiny piece of cotton or gauze on the tip of the wire or other protruding object. If an injury occurs from a piece of the retainer or braces lodging into a soft tissue, contact our office immediately and avoid dislodging it yourself.

## Dental Visits

Visit a dental health professional regularly

Visiting a dental health professional is just as important for your child's teeth as healthy eating habits and cleaning teeth daily.

It is recommended that you:

- Start early. We usually recommend the first visit from age one to two.
- Teach your child that visiting the dentist is healthy, interesting and pleasant. Remember that your child will notice and be influenced by your attitude to visiting the dentist.

### Three Reasons to Take Your Child to the Dentist

1. You will find out if the cleaning you do at home is working.
2. The dentist can find and fix problems early.
3. You will have an opportunity to ask questions about dental health.

## Sealants

Sealants fill in the little ridges on the chewing part of your teeth to protect and seal the tooth from food and plaque. The application is easy to apply and typically last for several years.

## Dos and Don'ts For A Great Smile

### Do...

- Check your baby's teeth once a month, for white or brown spots and anything unusual. Take your child to the dentist if you have a concern.
- Brush your child's teeth for two minutes, twice a day.
- Brush at bed time
- Floss everyday
- Visit the dentist regularly
- Make healthy eating and snacking a priority. Be a good role model.
- Ensure your child wears a mouthguard while playing sports. Find out more about sport mouthguards by calling your dental office.

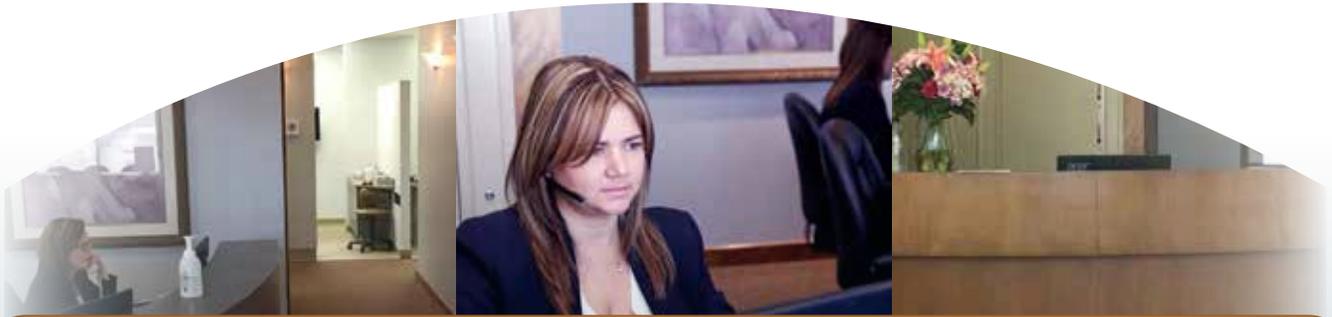
### Don'ts...

- Put your child to bed with a bottle or sippy cup. Use only plain water if you must give your baby a bottle in bed.
- Put sugary liquids such as pop, fruit drinks, and sweetened milk in a bottle or sippy cup.
- Share germs. Cavities are caused by bacteria (germs). These germs are passed to babies through saliva. Avoid sharing toothbrushes and spoons. DO NOT place baby's pacifier in your mouth.





## Ask About A Complimentary Consultation!



Call (905) 886-3396 to book your appointment.



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