

Are baby teeth important?

Oral health from birth to age five

Healthy baby teeth are important for eating, smiling, talking and keeping a place for adult teeth.

Good dental habits help prevent tooth decay and promote good general health

Birth to three years

- Use a clean cloth to wipe your baby's gums and teeth after each feeding.
- As soon as teeth appear, brush your baby's teeth at least twice a day using a small, soft-bristled toothbrush and water (no toothpaste).
- Once a month, lift your baby's top lip and check for decay. Look at the front and back of the top four teeth. If you see white or brown spots, take your baby to the dentist.
- When your baby is able to sit up alone, give baby a training cup to drink from.
- Never use corn syrup or sweeteners on a soother.
- Germs that cause cavities are passed from person to person. Never put your baby's soother or spoon in your mouth or allow sharing with others.
- If your baby sleeps with a bottle, use only water.
- Toddlers should stop using bottles between 18 months and two years of age.
- At two years of age, start taking your child to the dentist. Your child should visit the dentist regularly.

Three to five years

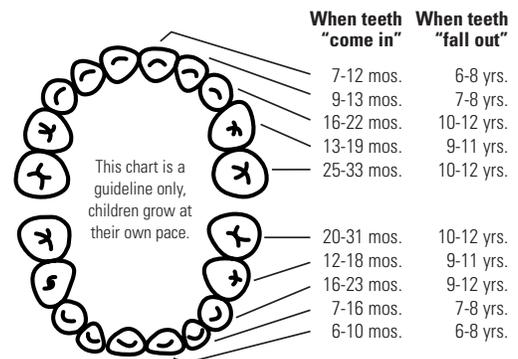
- At three years of age, start using fluoride toothpaste when brushing your child's teeth. Toddlers cannot brush their teeth properly, so you will have to do it for them. Be sure to rinse toothpaste from your child's mouth and do not let your child swallow or eat toothpaste.
- Brush twice a day, especially before bedtime.
- Use a child-sized, soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Apply a small amount of toothpaste about the size of a match head to the toothbrush.  Be sure to brush the hard-to-reach molars near the back.
- At three years of age, start flossing your child's teeth.



Good eating habits promote healthy teeth

Eating healthy, nutritious food is good for teeth, gums and general health. This is especially important for your growing child.

- Offer healthy snacks of fresh fruit, cheese, milk and crackers.
- Water is the best drink for quenching your child's thirst between meals.
- Limit fruit juice to mealtimes.
- Cut down on candies, sweets and drinks with sugar.
- When your child does have candies or sweet or sticky food, brush their teeth.



For more information contact:
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