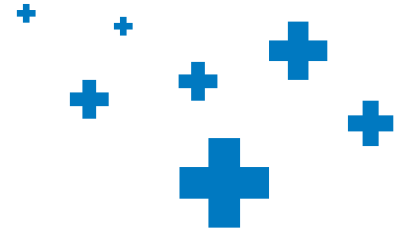




You can begin teaching your children good dental care habits at an early age. Strong, healthy teeth are an important part of their health and development.



Your child's **DENTAL HEALTH**

Taking care of your child's teeth and gums is important to his or her health over the years. You can start by taking care of his or her teeth at an early age.

Baby teeth help children learn to speak and chew naturally, and they hold the place for permanent teeth until they are ready to come in.

- Clean your baby's teeth and gums with plain water and a small, soft-bristled infant toothbrush or washcloth.
- Don't let infants fall asleep with a bottle of formula, milk or juice in their mouth. The liquid can pool around the teeth and cause cavities.
- Juice and other high sugar beverages should be given in a cup, never from a bottle.
- Help toddlers brush their teeth until they can brush by themselves – usually around age 7. Start with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride on your child's brush at age 2 or 3. Don't let children swallow excess toothpaste.
- Take your child to the dentist when the first tooth appears or by his or her first birthday.¹

Sugary snacks and drinks create bacteria in the mouth and lead to higher acid levels. The acid eats away at tooth enamel and eventually leads to cavities.²

- Foods that are high in acid – like pickles and lemons – can lead to cavities. Limit the amount your children eat and make sure they brush their teeth after eating these foods.
- Encourage your kids to stay away from sticky candy and if they do, chew sugarless gum.

¹ The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

² Academy of General Dentistry



HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR DENTAL EMERGENCIES:

- **Knocked-out, permanent tooth** – Immediately pick the tooth up by the crown and put it in a glass of cool milk. Don't clean the tooth or touch the roots. If you can get to the dentist within 30 minutes, he or she may be able to replace it.
- **Broken tooth** – Rinse the mouth with warm water to help clean the area and soothe the tooth. Place an ice pack on the cheek nearest the injury to keep swelling down. See the dentist as soon as possible.

- Sports drinks and sodas have a lot of sugar. Limit the number that your children drink – or add water. Give children straws to use and have them rinse their mouth with water after drinking.
- Talk to your dentist about applying sealants to the chewing surfaces of your child's back teeth where cavities form most often. This clear or tooth colored plastic protects the grooves in the teeth where bacteria forms.

Fluoride strengthens teeth and makes it harder for cavities to form. If your child is at high risk for tooth decay, ask your dentist about getting fluoride treatments.

- Fluoride is found in drinking water and toothpaste. Most community water supplies also include fluoride.³
- Although there are hundreds of brands of bottled water in the United States, only a small number have added fluoride. Check the label of your bottled water to see if it includes fluoride. If not, consider giving your child more tap water.

Children who play sports or other activities such as skating and bicycling should wear a mouth guard to protect their teeth if they fall. Your dentist can custom-make a mouth guard that offers the best fit and comfort. Basic guards are also available in sporting good stores.

³ "Information About Fluoride." State of Tennessee.



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