Children’s Oral Health Initiative

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A guide to looking after your children’s oral health.

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Oral health essentials

• Supervise your children’s oral health practices until they are 8 years old. This will make sure their teeth get the proper care and attention they need.
• Begin your child’s oral health at infancy. Baby teeth are very important, and tooth brushing is an essential habit that should start from an early age.
• Brush your child’s teeth for two minutes twice a day. This will help them to avoid oral problems in the future. The last thing to touch your child’s mouth before going to bed should be a toothbrush (or washcloth for babies).

Oral health and general health

• Oral health is critical to overall health. Oral problems could have a great affect on your child's development and wellbeing, for example; problems with eating and drinking, pain and discomfort, restless nights, fatigue and low concentration, low self-esteem and a reluctance to smile.

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A child’s diet is very important for the teeth.

- Wear your child off bottle-feeding when possible, and teach them to drink from a baby cup.
- Limit children to three meals and two snacks a day.
- Avoid food that contains high levels of sugar, or adding sugar to your child’s food or milk.
- Choose healthy snacks, like fruit and vegetables. Cheese is also a good option.
- Drink water!
- Avoid letting your child drink juice and soft drinks.

Brushing

- Children’s teeth should be brushed twice a day, especially before they go to bed.
- Brushing is important as it removes plaque from the surface of the teeth.
- Plaque is a constantly growing, build up of bacteria. If not removed, the plaque can produce acids that lead to tooth decay (cavities).
- Proper brushing with fluoride toothpaste is one of the most proven ways to stay decay free.
- Start brushing your children’s teeth as soon as they appear, even if they are just baby teeth.
- Treat brushing as a routine, and make sure you brush all of the teeth, not forgetting the teeth at the back of the mouth (molars).
- We recommended that you help or assist your child when brushing, as children aren’t fully dexterous until they are 7 or 8 years old.
- Choose a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles.
- Never share a toothbrush, and replace it every 3 months or when it becomes splayed.
- Use age appropriate fluoride toothpaste.
- Ask your dental professional if you are not sure about which toothpaste you should use for your child.

Flossing

- Flossing helps to remove the plaque in between the teeth that brushing may have missed.
- Flossing regularly can help to build good habits for the future.
- It’s a good idea to get some tips from a dental professional.
- Children under the age of 8 should be assisted by an adult.

Maintain regular dental check-ups

- Ideally, children should start visiting a dental professional from the age of 1.
- It will help them become familiar with the dental environment, and you will be able to get important information and advice.
- Discuss with your dental professional how to provide good oral hygiene for your child, and get further information about toothbrushes, toothpastes, flossing and dental sealants.