

The first teeth appear around the six-month mark, but it can take up to a year for the first teeth to come through. The average child has a complete set of twenty teeth by the time they reach three years old.<sup>1</sup>

## Baby Teeth

Baby teeth have an extra special function. They act as place markers for adult teeth. Baby teeth help keep permanent teeth straight. Some children *lose* baby teeth early, which can put their future teeth out of *balance*. This can cause *crooked* teeth as there is nothing to stop the new teeth from moving into the empty space created by that freshly made gap. If the spaces remain, then their back teeth will *shift* when they come together and can create lifelong *problems* with their jaw joints if not corrected with braces.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

People with good oral health are less likely to suffer with

- Heart Disease
- Diabetes
- Weak Bones
- Eating Disorders
- Alzheimer's Disease

## Teaching Good Brushing Habits

- **Start** once their 1st tooth is above the gum line.
- **Gently brush** using a toothpaste specially formulated for babies' sensitive teeth.
- Make sure you **use the right amount of toothpaste**, which for a toddler should be no bigger than a grain of *rice*.
- **Make it routine**, like the bed book, brush routine.<sup>6</sup>
- **Brush twice a day** to develop good habits. Let them brush their teeth themselves after you have done a thorough brushing.
- **Gently floss** as soon as two teeth touch, just enough to remove anything stuck.<sup>7</sup>
- Increase the amount of toothpaste to a **pea-sized amount when your child turns three.**<sup>7</sup>
- Most infant and toddler toothpaste does not contain the cavity fighting ingredient fluoride. Even though fluoride is essential, **do not use toothpaste containing fluoride** before you are certain your child can brush their teeth without swallowing it.<sup>3</sup> Fluoride can cause *stomach* problems and may make your child feel sick, *throw up*, or have diarrhea if swallowed. If an excessive amount of fluorinated toothpaste is swallowed, there can be more serious problems and parents should call poison control at 1-800-222-1222 for treatment advice.
- **Teach your child to rinse and spit** after every brushing to prevent fluorosis (white spots that appear on teeth as a result of too much fluoride).
- **Set a two minute timer** or *play a favorite song to encourage and teach your child to brush long enough.*

## Dental Visits

Your child's first dentist appointment can be booked somewhere between when the first tooth appears and their first birthday. When your child has their *first* appointment, the dentist will check to make sure that your child's *mouth* is developing well for his or her age.<sup>9,10</sup>

Take your child to the dentist if <sup>4</sup>

- You see a **black spot** in your child's tooth.
- They complain of **tooth pain**, a common sign of tooth decay.
- If they **knock out a tooth** from falls, hits to the face, or rough play. If a tooth falls out, keep it moist and try to put the tooth back in the hole and avoid handling the root, but only if your child understands not to swallow it. You can also place the tooth in milk or ask your child to hold it securely between their teeth and gums. Call your dentist immediately.
- **For broken or chipped teeth**, rinse your child's mouth with warm water and apply a cold compress to reduce swelling. Call your dentist and they will advise you of what to do next.
- It is common for children to bite their tongue or lip. A cold compress is beneficial. If it is bleeding a lot then call your medical provider.

## Prevent Decay

- **Limit non-essential sugar**, such as soda, candy, sugary cereals, and processed foods.<sup>12</sup>
- **Don't put your child to bed with a bottle**, unless it contains nothing but water.<sup>13</sup>

### Resources include:

1. American Dental Association. Baby Teeth. Found at <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/baby-teeth>, accessed 11-15-2018.
2. Sandilands, T. Colgate. Space Maintainers For Premature Tooth Loss. Found at <https://www.colgate.com/en-us/oral-health/cosmetic-dentistry/early-orthodontics/space-maintainers-for-premature-tooth-loss>,
3. John Harmon, MD. Interview.
4. American Dental Association. Concerns. Found at <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/babies-and-kids/concerns>, accessed 11-15-2018.
5. Mayo Clinic. Adult Health. Found at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475>, accessed 11-15-2018, updated November 1, 2018.
6. American Academy of Pediatrics. Brush, Book, Bed: How to Structure Your Child's Nighttime Routine. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brush-Book-Bed.aspx>, accessed 11-16-2018, updated June 7, 2014.
7. WebMD. Brushing and Flossing Children's Teeth. Found at <https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/brushing-flossing-child-teeth#1>, accessed 11-15-2018.
8. Poison Control. My Child Ate Toothpaste. Found at <https://www.poison.org/articles/2015-dec/toothpaste>, accessed 11-15-2018.
9. American Dental Association. First Dental Visit. Found at <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/babies-and-kids/first-dental-visit>, accessed 11-15-2018.
10. Eddis, Y. Dental Fear Of The Pediatric Dentist: The Parent's Role. Found at <https://www.colgate.com/en-us/oral-health/basics/dental-visits/dental-fear-of-the-pediatric-dentist-the-parents-role-0414>, accessed 11-15-2018.
11. NHS Scotland. Drinks for Healthy Baby Teeth. Found at <http://www.child-smile.org.uk/parents-and-carers/birth-to-3-years-old/drinks-for-healthy-baby-teeth.aspx>, accessed 11-15-2018.
12. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Found at [http://www.aapd.org/aapd\\_offers\\_tips\\_that\\_scare\\_away\\_cavities\\_and\\_promote\\_a\\_healthy\\_holiday/](http://www.aapd.org/aapd_offers_tips_that_scare_away_cavities_and_promote_a_healthy_holiday/), accessed 11-15-2018, updated February 1, 2010.
13. American Dental Association. Baby Bottle Tooth Decay. Found at <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/baby-bottle-tooth-decay>, accessed 11-15-2018.