

LIFETIME SMILES BEGIN EARLY



TIPS FOR HEALTHY TEETH

3 YEARS TO 5 YEARS

Baby teeth are important. Tooth decay in baby teeth can be painful and can cause health problems like infections. A clean and germ-free mouth is a healthy place for teeth to grow.

- * **Brush! Help your child brush his or her teeth with fluoride toothpaste.** Help brush your child's teeth twice a day with a small dab of fluoride toothpaste on a small, soft bristled toothbrush. The best times to brush are before bed and after breakfast. Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste.
- * **Eat well.** Give your child healthy snacks like cheese, vegetable sticks and fresh fruit. Keep sweet foods like cakes, pastries and candy for special treats, not every day.
- * **Rethink the drink.** Give your child milk, water or 100 percent fruit juice with meals. Avoid giving Kool-Aid, Gatorade, Sunny Delight, Capri Sun, soda or other sweet drinks to your child – they cause cavities.
- * **Lift the lip and look.** Children change quickly. Every month, lift your child's lip and check all of his or her teeth for the first signs of cavities. If you see white or brown spots on the teeth or anything unusual, contact your child's dentist or physician.
- * **Ask your dentist or doctor if your child needs fluoride varnish.** Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on teeth to help prevent new cavities and help stop cavities that have already started.
- * **Take your child to the dentist.** Children should see the dentist at least once a year; more often if they have had cavities.
- * **Ask your dentist if your child needs dental sealants.** Dental sealants are a thin plastic coating applied to the pits and fissures on the chewing surfaces of the teeth to prevent tooth decay.
- * **Stop using pacifiers.** Talk with your dentist if your child is older than 3 and regularly sucks a pacifier or his fingers or thumb.
- * **Protect your child's teeth from injury.** Use an approved car safety seat when riding in a car. Be sure your child wears appropriate protective gear when participating in physical activities that could potentially result in injury to the mouth.



For more information, contact:
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DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

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