

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



FEBRUARY 2019

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: YOUR CHILD'S DENTAL HEALTH



February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Having healthy teeth will help children chew food, speak clearly and be confident. Many parents do not know what type of dental care their child needs. You might know that preventing cavities is important, but not the best way to do so.

Tips for a healthy mouth

Here are some guidelines for starting good oral health habits:

- Teach your child to brush his or her teeth at least two times a day and floss.
- Use a soft-bristle toothbrush. The package will tell you if the bristles are soft or medium. You should also replace your child's toothbrush every three months.

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Schedule dental checkups from once every three months to once a year, depending on your dentist's recommendations.



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- Take two to three minutes on brushing all of the teeth. It can help to have a timer in the bathroom that lasts about two minutes, to ensure that your child is spending enough time brushing.
- If children are younger than 3, caregivers should brush their teeth as soon as they begin to get teeth.
- If children are 3 to 6 years of age, they should be supervised while brushing and reminded not to swallow the toothpaste.
- The American Dental Association recommends that a child's first dental visit take place within six months of their first tooth appearing, but no later than a child's first birthday.
- Make sure to schedule dental checkups anywhere from once every three months to once a year, depending on your dentist's recommendations.
- Encourage your kids to use a mouthguard during sports, which can prevent serious dental injuries.

Helping your child get in the habit of brushing twice a day for two minutes can be difficult, but there are ways to make it easier. If your child pushes back against brushing, try these tips:

- **Keep the routine!** Even when on vacation, make sure your child is brushing twice a day for two minutes.
- **Your children learn from you, so set a good example.** Brush your teeth with them for two minutes, twice a day.
- **Make those two minutes fun.** Play your child's favorite song or read a two-minute story while they brush their teeth.
- **Let your child pick out his or her own toothbrush and toothpaste.**
- **Reward good oral health habits.**

SOURCES:

- <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/babies-and-kids/healthy-habits>
- https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/children_adults/child.htm
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/healthy.html>
- <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/babies-and-kids/fun-ways-to-encourage-kids-to-brush>

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