

Brushing, Flossing and Rinsing

Everyday Ways to Prevent Tooth Decay

Brushing

- Dentists recommend a child-sized toothbrush with soft bristles.
- Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste with cavity protection that is also gentle on enamel, and spit out the remaining toothpaste when finished brushing. Children under 2 years should consult a dentist prior to use of fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush at least **twice a day**, morning and bedtime, for about 2 minutes each time.
- Toothpaste works with a combination of fluoride to help repair and strengthen tooth enamel; gentle abrasives (such as silica) to help remove stains and plaque, and polish teeth; detergents (such as sodium lauryl sulfate) to create a foaming action that makes brushing easier; and other ingredients to help whiten teeth, freshen breath, etc.

Flossing

- Helps remove plaque between teeth and below the gum line, and also helps prevent gingivitis, an early form of gum disease.
- Children should floss as soon as their teeth begin to touch.
- Until about age 8, most children need parents' help because they don't have the dexterity to floss. A plastic-handled "flosser" can make it easier.
- Floss regularly.

Rinsing

- An antimicrobial rinse can kill germs that cause plaque, gingivitis and bad breath. Rinsing for 30 seconds, twice a day, can kill more plaque than brushing alone.
- A fluoride rinse can help strengthen teeth and prevent cavities.
- Children 6-12 years of age can use a rinse with adult supervision. Always read and follow the directions for the mouthrinse that you use.
- After rinsing, spit the rinse in the sink (don't swallow it).
- Rinse should be used in conjunction with brushing and flossing.

How to Brush



Brush the outer tooth surface of 2-3 teeth at a time along the gumline using a gentle circular motion. Move brush to the next group of 2-3 teeth and repeat.



Brush the insides of the front teeth by tilting the brush vertically; use the "toe" of the brush (the front half) with gentle, short up-and-down strokes.



On the chewing surfaces hold the brush flat and use a gentle scrubbing motion. Don't forget to brush the top of your tongue to remove bacteria that can cause bad breath.

How to Floss



Hold the floss between your thumbs and forefingers. Leave about 1" of floss between your hands.



Gently work the floss between your teeth. When you reach the gumline, curve into a "C" shape around the tooth, making sure to go below the gumline.



Gently glide the floss up and down several times between each tooth, including your back teeth. Apply pressure against the tooth while flossing. Unwind new floss as needed.

When Using a Flosser



Guide floss between teeth using a gentle back-and-forth motion. Move up and down against tooth to remove plaque and food (repeat for each tooth). Discard after use.

Fluoride, Checkups and Healthy Eating

For a Lifetime of Good Dental Health

Fluoride

- A mineral that helps strengthen tooth enamel — and repair damaged enamel.
- Helps enhance tooth strength with the body's own minerals, such as calcium.
- Protects teeth from acid attack.
- Inhibits bacteria in plaque from producing acid.
- Children can get fluoride through:
 - Water
 - Fluoride supplements (usually tablets)
 - Professional fluoride treatments
 - Fluoride gels, rinses, toothpastes



Dental Checkups

Ideally, children should visit a dentist:

- Within 6 months of the eruption of their first baby tooth.
- Then twice a year or as recommended by the child's dentist.

At a checkup, the dentist and/or dental hygienist will:

- Examine the child's mouth for early signs of decay or other problems.
- Monitor tooth growth.
- Clean the teeth.
- If necessary, strengthen the teeth with a fluoride treatment.
- Dentists sometimes recommend sealants — clear plastic coatings over the chewing surfaces of back teeth, where decay most often occurs. Sealants shield uneven surfaces from food and plaque.

If children are anxious about going to the dentist, you can ease their fears with a few simple facts:

- Dentists and dental hygienists are friendly people who help to keep teeth healthy.
- Explain what happens at a dental checkup and why.
- Explain the instruments and equipment the dentist might use in the office.
- Explain why dentists and hygienists wear gloves and masks.
- Ask a local dentist or hygienist to visit your class.

Healthy Eating

Snacks – Sugars and starches can contribute to tooth decay. Encourage students to:

- Limit the number of snacks they eat.
- Choose nutritious snacks such as raw vegetables, fruits and low-fat cheese.
- Limit sugary sodas and sports drinks. Note: Snacking or sipping on sugary food or drink over extended periods of time throughout the day can be especially harmful.

Facts About Teeth Background Information for Educators

Parts of a Tooth

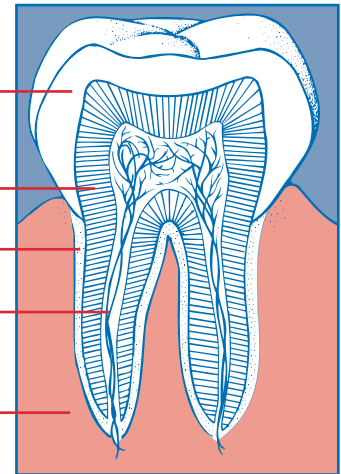
Enamel: Exceptionally hard outer layer that covers the crown, the section of tooth above the gumline.

Dentin: Hard tissue that forms the body of the tooth.

Cementum: Bone-like tissue that covers the root.

Pulp: "Living Core" in the center of the tooth, contains nerves and blood vessels.

Gum Tissue: Soft tissue which covers and protects roots of teeth and surrounding bone.



Primary ("Baby") Teeth

Begin to form before birth.

Start to erupt through the gums around 6 to 7 months. Most children have 20 primary teeth by age 3.

Important for chewing, speech, appearance, and as spacers for permanent teeth.

At 6 to 7 years, the first primary tooth roots begin to dissolve; then teeth loosen and fall out to make room for permanent teeth.

Back teeth serve as foundation for jaw development; remain for 9 to 12 years.

Some children are frightened when they begin to lose their primary teeth. They can be reassured that losing their "baby teeth" is a natural part of growing up, and that new, permanent teeth will quickly replace the teeth they lose.

Permanent Teeth

Most people eventually have 32 permanent teeth, including wisdom teeth.



8 Incisors – "front teeth," like chisels, to cut food



4 Cuspids – next to Incisors, pointed to tear food



8 Bicuspids – between Cuspids and Molars, like nutcrackers, to crush food



12 Molars – rear of mouth, like mortars and pestles, to grind food

Plaque and Decay

Plaque — A nearly colorless film on teeth, contains acid-producing bacteria that cause decay.

- Each time we eat foods with sugar or starch, these bacteria produce acids that attack tooth enamel for at least 20 minutes.

Decay — After repeated attacks, a hole (or cavity) can form through dissolved enamel. You can help prevent decay and cavities through:

- Daily brushing, flossing and rinsing
- Healthy eating
- Regular dental checkups



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