

# oral health fact sheet

ages 6- to 18-years-old

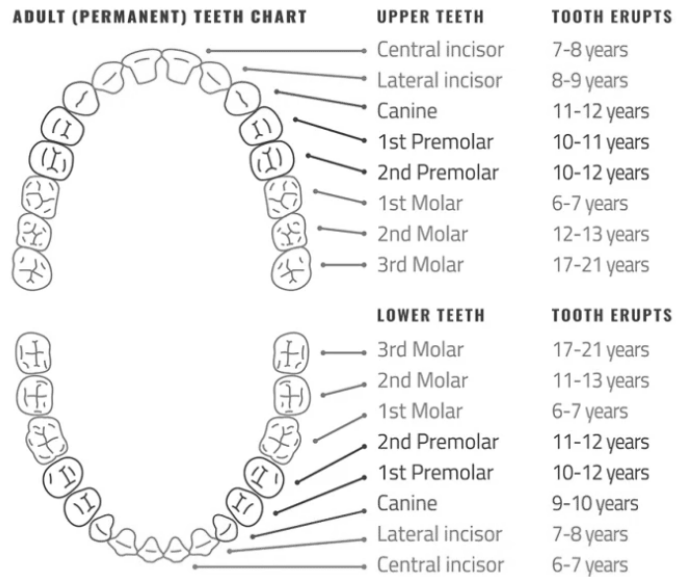
As your child transitions from baby teeth to permanent adult teeth, it's important to remember they will have these teeth for the rest of their life!

## oral hygiene

- Your child will want to brush their own teeth. A common rule is to continue to help with brushing their teeth, until you can also trust them to tie their shoes.
- Brush at least twice per day with fluoride toothpaste. One time after breakfast and one time right before bed.
- After toothbrushing, spit don't rinse.
- The fluoride toothpaste only prevents cavities if it stays on or near the teeth. Rinsing after brushing removes the small amount of fluoride from the mouth.
- Help your child floss their teeth.
- Some children need orthodontic (braces) treatment, and the timing of the treatment depends on individual circumstances. Some children benefit from starting earlier between ages 7- to 9-years-old, while others can wait until their teenage years before starting braces. Oral hygiene and home care is even more important during this period! Braces are plaque traps, which builds up quickly and can cause cavities around the braces (Picture 1).
- Adult teeth will erupt further back in the mouth (Picture 2). Don't forget to get your child's toothbrush and floss all the way in the back.



picture 1



picture 2

## nutrition

- Continue a healthy, whole food diets you started earlier in your child's life.
- Provide your child with healthy, whole foods such as an apple instead of apple juice.
- Avoid letting your child snack on foods and sweetened beverages throughout the day. Frequent snacking of high-sugar or high-acidity foods limits our saliva's ability to protect the teeth from acid breakdown. Frequent snacking makes our teeth more likely to get a cavity.

continued on back

## **nutrition (*continued*)**

- Water that has fluoride is preferable and helpful for your child's teeth. Sports drinks, energy drinks, carbonated drinks and soda may become popular as your child gets older. Choose sugar-free options and have them drink in one sitting instead of throughout the day.
- While sugar-free drink options have little to no sugar compared to regular options, it's important to remember they can be acidic. The acidity can cause teeth to break down.

## **routine dental care**

- If you haven't already, schedule your child for a dental visit.
- Regular dental visits are recommended twice a year or every 6 months.
- Your dentist will check for decay and make sure that the teeth are erupting properly.
- You should take your child to the dentist if you notice white, brown or black spots on their teeth.
- As your child plays in sports and other activities, remember to protect their teeth with a mouthguard. Over-the-counter ("boil and bite") or custom-made mouthguards from your dentist are good options. The best one is the one the child will wear.

## **dental emergencies**

- If your child has a tooth that gets knocked out, contact a dentist right away. If you feel comfortable, replace the tooth back in the socket. If not, store it in milk as soon as possible. Believe it or not, water is not a good way to store a knocked-out tooth. Time is of the essence!
- Contact a dentist right away if a tooth is knocked loose, moved or pushed into the gums.
- If your child develops facial swelling, contact a dentist right away.

