

Oral Health Fact Sheet

Birth to 3-years-old

Baby teeth are important! They hold space for adult teeth, help chew food correctly and are important in speech development. A baby tooth with a cavity can cause pain, infection and swelling, affecting other parts of a child’s life, like sleep, attention or school performance.

Oral Hygiene

Age (stage)	Toothbrushing	Fluoride Toothpaste	Who’s brushing?
Under 1 year (or toothless)	Soft, clean cloth or infant toothbrush after feedings and at bedtimes	No	Parent
1-3 years old	Twice a day: once after breakfast and once right before bed	Yes; use the size of a grain of rice (Picture 1)	Parent
Over 3 years old	Twice a day: once after breakfast and once right before bed	Yes; pea-sized amount (Picture 1)	Ideally, parent



Picture 1

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.

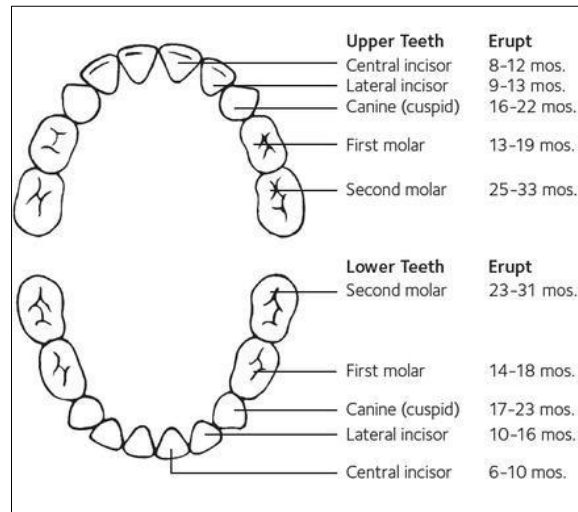
Nutrition

It’s not just WHAT, but HOW children eat

- Start a healthy habit – do not put your baby to sleep with a bottle.
- Never put juice, soda or flavored milk in a bottle.
- 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.
- Limit juice to meal and snack times. Only water throughout the day. Water that has fluoride is helpful for your child’s teeth.
- Provide your child with healthy, whole foods such as an apple instead of apple juice.

Establishing Care

- If your baby has a tooth present at birth, see a dentist as soon as possible for evaluation.
- Baby teeth typically start to erupt at 6 to 12 months (Picture 2).
- Your baby's first dental visit should be when the first tooth appears or by their first birthday.
- Regular dental visits are recommended twice a year or every 6 months.
- You should take your child to the dentist sooner if you notice white, brown or black spots on their teeth.



Picture 2

Teething Tips

- Your baby may be fussy, drool more and have disrupted sleep as teeth start to come in.
- Gently rub the gums with a cool, wet, clean washcloth.
- Give your baby a cool, rubber teething ring to chew on.

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.