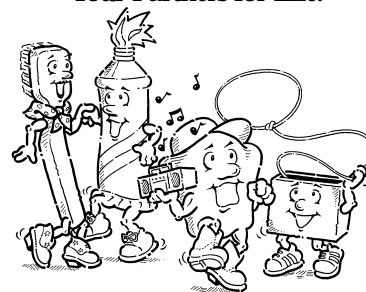


DENTAL

Facts

Mouth Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers (twelve months to 5 years)

Gleam TEAM
Your Partners for Life.



Your Child Can Be Cavity Free for Life!



Your child's primary teeth are more than "just baby teeth". They help maintain proper spacing until the permanent teeth come in. Primary teeth are also important for chewing, speaking, and appearance.

Children who learn good dental habits at an early age are more likely to keep their teeth healthy for a lifetime! Show your child that dental care is important. Set a good example and start dental care early.

- **Brush your child's teeth and gums at least twice a day with a "soft-bristled" toothbrush.** It takes 2-3 minutes to remove all the plaque from teeth and gums. Plaque is the sticky, colourless layer of bacteria that keeps forming on the teeth and gums. Children need help brushing their teeth every day, until they are able to do it well on their own (usually by age 8).

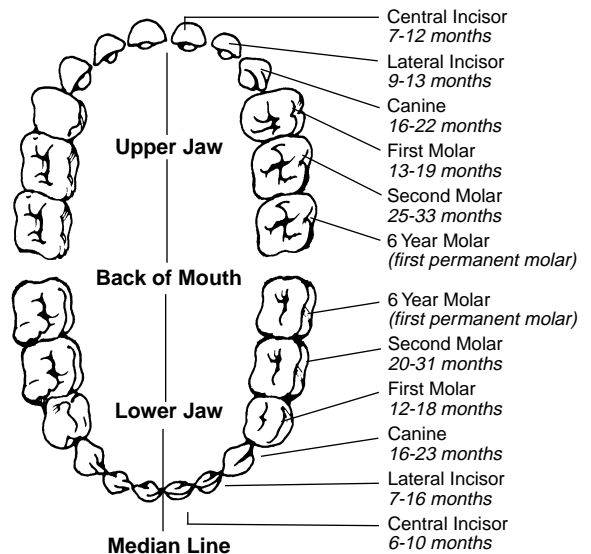
- **Brush your toddler's teeth, while your toddler is lying down.** This is a safe position and it will get your toddler used to having someone working in his/her mouth while in a lying position...just like being at the dentist. However, use any position where you can support the head and see the teeth clearly.



- **Use only a tiny, pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.** Toothpaste isn't necessary to remove plaque, however the fluoride in toothpaste will help strengthen tooth enamel and prevent tooth decay. Try not to allow your child to swallow the toothpaste.
- **Floss your child's teeth daily once two teeth are close together or touch each other.** Flossing will remove plaque from between the teeth and under the gums. Starting to floss at an early age will help form good flossing habits. **Children need you to floss their teeth every day** until they are able to do it well on their own (usually by age 10).

- **Check your child's teeth often.** If at any time you notice brown or white spots on your child's teeth, call a dentist right away. This may be the first sign of "early childhood tooth decay". Left untreated, these spots may lead to serious tooth decay, pain, and infection.
- **Begin dental visits by 1 year of age.** This will help form healthy habits and you will receive information about how to prevent tooth decay. **MSI covers the cost of most routine dental services for children up to the end of the month in which the child turns 10.** For more information, talk to your dentist or call MSI toll free at 1-800-563-8880.
- Choose between-meal snacks based on *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. The booklet *After Year One Food for Children* contains many healthy snack suggestions and is available from your local Public Health Services office. Water is a good choice for children who like to sip on something all day long. However, water should not replace the other nutritious foods that your child needs to grow and to be healthy. Milk and unsweetened juices contain natural sugars. If milk and/or juice are sipped on all day long, they too can increase your child's risk of tooth decay if teeth are not properly cleaned. **Limit sugary snacks.** Frequent snacking throughout the day will put your child at risk of getting cavities when plaque is present. Sugar plus bacterial plaque in the mouth can lead to tooth decay. The longer sugar and plaque are left on your child's teeth, the greater the risk of decay.
- **Fluoride supplements are not usually necessary before age 3.** Discuss the use of fluoride supplements with your family dentist at your child's regular dental visits. Remember, dental visits should begin at 1 year of age. Fluoride supplements should never be used until you determine the level of fluoride in your drinking water.

- **Protect your child's teeth.** Teach your child not to chew on things such as pencils and to avoid rough play on swings, slides, and other playground equipment. When your child starts playing sports (eg. street hockey) a mouthguard is recommended. If your child injures a tooth, call your dentist right away.
- **Discourage thumb sucking and the use of pacifiers by age 5.** Thumb sucking and pacifiers will likely not have any long term effects on your child's teeth as long as they stop by the time the permanent teeth come in. If thumb sucking is a problem, talk to your dentist, physician, or contact your local Public Health Services office.



Between the ages of 4 and 6, children begin to lose their primary teeth. At this time, watch for your child's 6 year molars (first permanent molars) to appear behind the last primary teeth. Check with your dentist to see if these teeth require sealants.

For further information on dental care for your toddler or preschooler, contact your local Public Health Services office (see the blue pages of your telephone directory under "Health").