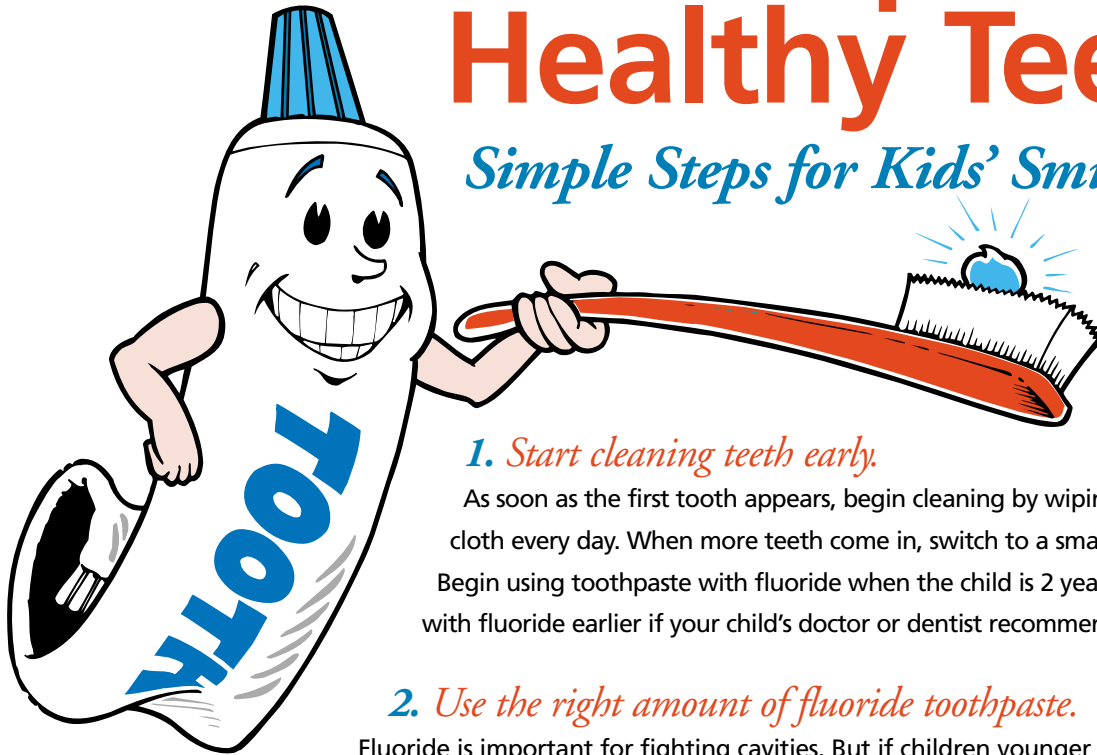


Brush Up on Healthy Teeth

Simple Steps for Kids' Smiles



1. Start cleaning teeth early.

As soon as the first tooth appears, begin cleaning by wiping with a clean, damp cloth every day. When more teeth come in, switch to a small, soft toothbrush. Begin using toothpaste with fluoride when the child is 2 years old. Use toothpaste with fluoride earlier if your child's doctor or dentist recommends it.

2. Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste.

Fluoride is important for fighting cavities. But if children younger than 6 years old swallow too much fluoride, their permanent teeth may have white spots. To keep this from happening, use only a small amount of toothpaste (about the size of a pea). Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste and to rinse well after brushing.

3. Supervise brushing.

Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone. Then continue to closely watch brushing to make sure the child is doing a thorough job and using only a small amount of toothpaste.

4. Talk to your child's doctor or dentist.

Check with the doctor or dentist about your child's specific fluoride needs. After age 2, most children get the right amount of fluoride to help prevent cavities if they drink water that contains fluoride and brush their teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

Parents of children older than 6 months should ask about the need for a fluoride supplement if drinking water does not have enough fluoride.

Do not let a child younger than 6 years old use a fluoride mouth rinse unless the child's doctor or dentist recommends it.

Early care for your children's teeth will protect their smile and their health.



5. Why and When to start flossing?

You should start flossing for your child at the age of 4. By the time they are 8 most kids can begin flossing for themselves.

Flossing daily to remove plaque from between teeth and under gum line, before it can harden into tartar. Once tartar has formed it can only be removed by a professional.

6. Dental Sealants, how do I know if my child needs them?

A dental sealant creates a highly-effective barrier against decay. Sealants are thin plastic coatings applied to the chewing surface of a child's back teeth, where most cavities form. Applying a sealant is not painful and can be performed in one dental visit. Your dentist can tell whether your child might benefit from dental sealants.

7. Diet is very important to a child's oral health

A balanced diet is necessary for a child to develop strong, decay-resistant teeth. In addition to a full range of vitamins and minerals, a child's diet should include plenty of calcium, phosphorus, and proper levels of fluoride.

8. What to do in case of tooth injury

There is bound to be bumps and bruises, especially in toddlers and young children. Sometimes the mouth can become injured, resulting in bleeding gums, a darkened tooth or even a loosened or knocked out tooth.

Gums Bleeding: Give a child's pain reliever to reduce inflammation (such as ibuprofen). Watch for signs of a gum boil/blister next to the injury, such as fever and swollen tender gums. A dental x-ray can make sure the underlying tooth is healthy.

Loosened Tooth: A dislodged tooth may need to be placed back into position if it interferes with the child's bite. A loose tooth should tighten up again. Give the child a pain reliever to reduce inflammation. A dental x-ray can make sure the underlying root is healthy.

Knocked Out Tooth: A knocked out baby tooth should not be replaced in the socket. This is because the baby tooth will not heal properly and will cause problems later when the permanent tooth erupts. Give the child a pain reliever to reduce inflammation and consult the child's dentist. Space maintainers are available for cosmetic purposes only and are not necessary when a front tooth has come out early.

Darkened Tooth: A darkened tooth indicates previous trauma that caused the tooth to bruise on the inside. A dark tooth does not necessarily mean the nerve has died. The tooth will need to be watched by a dentist, with periodic x-rays, to make sure the tooth stays healthy.