



Helping Your Kids Grow Up With Healthy Teeth

Protecting Teeth From Infancy On

Think of dental health as part of your baby's overall health

- Clean your baby's teeth and gums after each feeding, using a small washcloth or gauze pad to help remove food residue and to massage gums.
- Brush for your baby using warm water and a small soft-bristled toothbrush once teeth come in.
- DO NOT let your baby fall asleep with a feeding bottle, and DO NOT use a feeding bottle as a pacifier, unless it contains water. Prolonged and frequent use of a bottle containing any kind of sugary liquids (including breast milk, regular milk, formula or fruit juice) can lead to what's called "baby bottle tooth decay," meaning decay and discoloration in your baby's upper front teeth.
- Teach your baby to drink from a cup around the first birthday. This can go a long way toward eliminating "baby bottle tooth decay."
- Don't worry about thumbsucking or pacifier use causing dental problems as long as your child stops doing so by the time the first permanent teeth start to come in (usually around age 6).

Take quick action for knocked-out, broken, chipped or fractured teeth

- Find the knocked-out tooth and handle it by the top (not by the roots). Rinse the tooth gently with water, but don't scrub it. Place it in room temperature milk or water.
- Get to the dentist quickly! If you get to the dentist within 30 minutes to an hour, there's a 90 % chance that the dentist can reinsert the child's permanent tooth and save it. Remember – a knocked-out baby tooth should NOT be reimplanted.
- See the dentist as soon as possible for a broken or chipped tooth, even if your child's mouth doesn't hurt. Get to the dentist within an hour if you see a blood spot, which indicates a fracture.
- Clean the area around a chipped or damaged tooth with warm water and apply a cold compress outside to reduce swelling. Save any pieces of broken tooth, because the dentist often can bond these back on to the injured tooth.

Follow important steps to avoid damage to teeth

- Insist your child wear a mouthguard and helmet during contact sports and other sports in which falling is a risk (like bike-riding and rollerblading). You can buy mouthguards at sporting goods stores or ask your dentist to custom-fit one for your child.
- Keep your child from biting or chewing on hard objects like ice, popcorn kernels or pencils. Follow other safety precautions, such as placing furniture guards on sharp table corners, taping down loose rugs, and always making sure your child uses a car seat or seat belt.

Courtesy of: Dr. Lisa Popkoff, Dentistry for Children and Adults
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