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February is Dental Health Month

## National Children's Dental Health Month



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
Community Health Centers®

A bright smile begins long before the first tooth appears. Parent and caregiver help is important for children to develop healthy teeth.

All infants should receive oral health risk assessments by 6 months of age at their well-child visit with their medical provider and at every well-child checkup.

### Steps to good dental health include

- Regular care by a dentist beginning by 1 year of age
- Brushing and flossing 2 times each day
- Eating healthy and limiting sugar
- Using a mouth guard during sports participation to prevent injury, if necessary

### Here's how to clean your child's teeth.

#### Babies to 3 years of age:

- Wipe the gums 2 times each day with a piece of gauze or a damp cloth until the first tooth or teeth arrive.
- Brush the first tooth or teeth with a soft toothbrush 2 times each day. Brush for 2 minutes each time.
- Use "Just a dot, not a lot!" of fluoride toothpaste. The amount of toothpaste should be the size of a small grain of rice for children younger than 3 years.



*Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! [Psalm 124:6](#)*



## ORAL HYGIENE TIPS



Find toothpaste and toothbrushes that your kids enjoy using - look for products featuring their favorite characters



Try dental health activities to show your kids how teeth are affected by soda and how cavities form



Make an oral hygiene chart for your kids to mark off daily brushing and flossing & keep tabs on the whole family

## TOP MISTAKES PARENTS MAKE WITH THEIR KIDS' TEETH



### LETTING THEM BRUSH THEIR TEETH ALONE

Your kids need your help to make sure they're brushing properly and cleaning all surfaces of their teeth. It takes time to become a good brusher!



**LETTING BABIES FALL ASLEEP DRINKING FROM A BOTTLE**  
Baby bottle tooth decay is a big problem, and falling asleep with a bottle containing milk or juice in the mouth is the top cause.



### WAITING TO SCHEDULE THE FIRST EXAM

Many parents wait until their child is 2 or 3 to take them in, but this makes it more likely that they'll have cavities and will require general anesthesia for treatment.



### PROVIDING SECRETLY SUGARY SNACKS

Try to limit options like bananas, raisins and other sticky, sweet treats that cling to the teeth, or give them to your kids with meals. You should also avoid soda & sports drinks for kids & teens alike.



### DOWNPLAYING CAVITIES

Cavities can lead to long-term problems for your kids, even if they take hold in baby teeth. Baby teeth help guide permanent tooth development, and cavities can lead to problems with self-esteem and school performance.

### FLUORIDE

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### AVOIDING FLUORIDE

The ADA recommends that children use fluoride toothpaste from the age of 1 onwards to prevent cavities. Use an amount the size of a grain of rice for kids under 3, and the size of a pea for kids 3-6. If you're nervous about the amount of fluoride in their diet, talk to your dentist.

### SOURCES

<http://www.foxnews.com/health/2015/02/08/7-mistakes-parents-make-with-their-kids-teeth.html>  
<https://www.livescience.com/44296-oral-health-kids.html>  
<http://www.webmd.com/oral-health/guide/dental-health-your-childs-teeth>