



# PARENT'S GUIDE TO KID'S ORAL HEALTH

*What parents need to know to help their  
child develop good oral hygiene habits  
and have a healthy smile for life*

Spotlight Dental Hygiene



# Your Essential Dental Helpers



A toothbrush and floss are basic dental aids that help keep teeth and gums healthy. They help you remove harmful bacteria that can lead to cavities.

Baby toothbrushes have larger handles and extra-soft bristles. Some don't even have bristles and instead will have soft silicone projections that can massage the gums while your little ones practice brushing.

Toddlers and young kids can use a child-sized toothbrush. A small toothbrush with soft or extra-soft bristles is best. Electric toothbrushes come in kids sizes too. Brush for at least 2 minutes

If teeth are touching, they need to be flossed. Children's flossers can make flossing easier. They come in fun shapes and colours and some have fluoride embedded in the floss for extra cavity protection. Water flossers can be used for tweens and teens with orthodontic appliances.

Use only fluoride-free toothpaste until kids are able to spit it out, Fluoride is great for teeth, but is not meant to be swallowed. Nano-Hydroxyapatite, Xylitol and calcium phosphate toothpastes are some alternatives that offer great cavity prevention. A pea-sized amount of toothpaste is all that you need to put on the toothbrush.



# Oral Hygiene for Every Stage

## Age 0 - 12 Months



Even before babies get their first tooth, it's important to practice good oral hygiene. At this stage, their diet is primarily milk or formula, which leaves residue on the oral tissues. Use a wet washcloth on your finger to wipe inside the baby's mouth every day. This cleans and massages the gums which can relieve teething discomfort. Baby toothbrushes are also great for cleaning and teething help.

## 1 - 5 Years



Baby teeth may have spaces in between or fit tightly together. It's important to floss between all teeth that are touching every day to prevent cavities. If your child likes to have a bottle before bed, it should only contain water. When milk sits on the teeth while they sleep, it can cause serious cavities that can progress very quickly. Kids should have a turn brushing their teeth, but parents need to be brushing for them at this stage too.



# Oral Hygiene for Every Stage

## 6 - 9 Years



It's tooth fairy time! Baby teeth are now falling out and being replaced with adult teeth. Crunchy fruits and vegetables are healthy snacks that can help wiggly teeth come out. Gums may be tender so give your child a very soft toothbrush. Kids still need help to brush their teeth properly at this stage even though they may be brushing on their own. Putting a clock in the bathroom or having a timer can help them track the time so they will brush for 2 minutes.

## 10 - 15 Years



Most kids will have lost all their baby teeth by the time they are in their teens and don't want help with brushing. Hormonal changes can cause gingivitis and they may need reminders to brush twice a day and floss at nights. If they have braces or any orthodontic appliances, extra brushing time is needed. Electric toothbrushes and water flossers are helpful. Reminding them of the consequences of poor oral hygiene (cavities, bleeding gums and bad breath) may be a good incentive.

# Some Conditions You May Notice

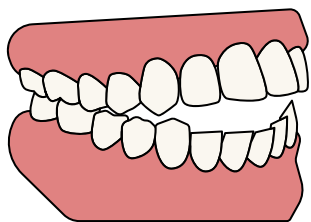


## *Nursing Bottle Caries*



This is what happens when a child goes to sleep with a bottle. Early tooth decay is caused by sugars from milk, formula, or juice sitting on the teeth for long periods of time and these cavities grow quickly. So don't let kids sleep with a bottle unless it's just water and clean their teeth before bed.

## *Open Bite Malocclusion*



Thumb sucking and some pacifiers can change the shape of the teeth and jaw, causing a narrow arch and teeth that don't come together properly. It can affect speech, eating and breathing. Try to break any thumb sucking habits, gently. Orthodontic soothers promote better tongue posture for babies and toddlers. Oro-Myofunctional therapy can also help children of all ages.

## *Black Line Stain*



This stain is not harmful and is caused by a specific type of bacteria (chromogenic) in the saliva that only some people have. Because this stain is on the surface of the teeth, it can be removed with polishing at the dental hygiene appointment. Practicing good oral hygiene between dental hygiene visits can help reduce the amount of stain that comes back.

## *Tongue Tie*



The flap of tissue attaching the tongue to the floor of the mouth can sometimes be extra short and tight, and prevent the tongue from its full range of motion. This can interfere with latching in babies and eating, speaking, and breathing in older kids and adults. This can be fixed surgically.



Kids can learn how to take care of their teeth so they don't get cavities. Give them the best start by teaching them good habits at home. Healthy snacks and brushing morning and night not only helps them to have healthy teeth, it can help them be healthy overall. Get them checked by a dental professional by age 1 or when they have teeth. Take them to your own dental hygiene appointments to get them used to the setting. They can have a ride in the chair and see that it can be fun. At home, you can brush together. Kids copy what they see and will follow what grownups do, so let them see you brush and floss every day.

I hope this booklet answered some questions you may have. Give your kids the best start for good oral health and they'll look forward to their dental hygiene visits. Happy brushing!

*Althea Ledgister RDH*