



Children's Oral Health

Good Habits Start Early

DID YOU KNOW?

- Childhood dental cavities rank as the most common chronic condition among children.
- Children should visit the dentist by age one.
- Childhood cavities are nearly 100% preventable.

Small changes in dental habits can have big effects on a child's dental health. At Delta Dental of Iowa, we realize how important it is to begin promoting good oral health at an early age. That's why we put together this guide especially for you and your children.

RISK FACTORS FOR INFANT CAVITIES

Infants may be at risk for getting cavities if any of the following are true:

- A bottle with milk or juice is used at nap time or before going to sleep.
- Siblings have had dental decay before the age of 5.
- Excessive sweets, juice or sticky foods in diet.
- Inadequate brushing and cleaning routine.
- Insufficient fluoride in water and lack of supplements.
- Chalky white spots on teeth.

FLUORIDE IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

Many communities now have fluoride added to the public water supply to provide residents with the proper amount of fluoride needed to ward off cavities. Talk to your dentist or hygienist to see if your child needs more fluoride. They can prescribe fluoride supplements to help protect your child's teeth against decay.

Facts on Fluoride

- In water it has been proven to reduce cavities by up to 50 percent.
- Fluoride is a mineral that helps developing enamel become strong and resistant to decay.
- Fluoride slows the growth of bacteria.

How to Care for Your Child's Teeth

THE FIRST TOOTH

Ages 0 to 23 months

- Before your baby's first tooth erupts, clean his or her gums with a damp washcloth after feedings. Cleaning your baby's gums will help keep bacteria levels low and maintain a clean home for his or her new teeth.
- Some babies experience sore gums and general discomfort when teething. Signs of teething include crankiness, lack of appetite, excessive drooling, restless behavior, pink or red cheeks, coughing, upset stomach and chewing or sucking on fingers and toys. You can help relieve the pain with teething toys or by giving your baby a cold, wet cloth to suck on.
- Once the first tooth erupts, use a soft toothbrush and water to brush your baby's teeth and gums in soft, gentle circles twice a day, and check for any spots or stains.
- Within six months of getting the first tooth — and no later than the first birthday — your baby should have his or her first dental visit.

BASIC PREVENTIVE CARE

Ages 2 to 6

- Use a smear (grain of rice-sized amount) of fluoridated toothpaste for children up to age 3. After your child's 3rd birthday, a pea-sized amount may be used. Parents should dispense toothpaste for young children and supervise and assist with brushing.
- Help your child brush properly twice daily, until he or she has the motor skills to handle the toothbrush alone.
- Your child's dentist will be able to spot any areas that may require extra attention when brushing. The dentist will also check for orthodontic problems, clean and polish teeth, apply a fluoride treatment and maintain a dental history for your child.

SEALANTS, DIET AND THE TOOTH FAIRY

Ages 7 to 12

- Your child's dentist may suggest that your child get sealants on their permanent molars as soon as the teeth come in — before decay attacks the teeth. The first permanent molars — called “6 year molars” — come in between the ages of 5 and 7. The second permanent molars — “12 year molars” — come in when a child is between 11 and 14 years old.
- Dental sealants are an easy, effective preventive measure. Once applied, they last about 10 years, and will need to be checked periodically for chips and wear.
- As a permanent tooth erupts, it pushes the primary tooth out of the way. Once a primary tooth is loose, have your child wiggle it back and forth or eat hard, crunchy foods to help it along.
- Frequent snacking allows sugars to build up in the mouth, increasing the risk of decay. When your child does snack, offer nutritious options like raw veggies, plain yogurt or fresh fruit. Afterward, encourage your child to drink water to rinse away food particles.
- Avoid sticky foods, such as chewy candy. These foods are not easily washed away by a drink or saliva, so they have high cavity-causing potential.
- Make sure your child is getting the recommended supply of calcium. In addition to building strong bones, calcium helps keep the teeth, gums and jawbones healthy. Milk and other dairy foods are excellent sources of calcium.

For more information on creating a lifetime of good oral health and maintaining a healthy smile, go to deltadentalia.com.

