

Brushing Your Child's Teeth

As children under 7-8 years old are too young to brush their teeth properly, it is important for adults to brush their children's teeth and be a good role model by brushing and flossing daily.

Healthy eating habits for healthy teeth:

- Healthy eating habits keep children's teeth healthy.
- Avoid sipping drinks and eating all day long, which can cause tooth decay.
- Teach children to use an open cup as soon as they can hold their head up.
- Offer milk and limited juice from a cup after age 12 months during meals or snacks.
- Offer water between meals and snacks.
- Offer three meals and 2-3 planned healthy snacks per day.
- Follow Canada's Food Guide.

Here is how to brush your child's teeth effectively:

1. Brush the teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day, as soon as they come in.
2. Use a small, soft toothbrush.
3. Pull the lip and cheek aside with a clean finger to get a better view.
4. Brush where the teeth and gums meet.
5. Use small back-and-forth movements.
6. Brush the inside, outside, and top of the teeth.
7. Visit a dental professional to learn when to start flossing and for more information on oral care.

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Fluoride toothpaste usage:

- Fluoride helps strengthen teeth for all ages.
- Children under 3 years old should use a rice grain-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Children over 3 years old should use a pea-sized amount.

Tips for brushing your child's teeth:

- Wipe your baby's gums with a damp cloth before teeth come in.
- Brush baby's teeth with a toothbrush as soon as they start to come in.
- Make brushing a part of your daily routine.
- Let children choose their favourite small, soft toothbrush.
- Find a flavour of fluoride toothpaste that your child likes.
- Sing a song, tell a story, or play music while brushing.
- Praise your child for letting you brush their teeth.
- Let children practice brushing on their own, but an adult should always finish brushing.
- Use the "knee-to-knee" technique to make brushing easier.

Dental check-ups:

- Take your child to the dentist by 12 months of age.
- Regular dental check-ups can prevent tooth decay.
- See Terra Nova's Handout on Public Health Dental Programs if you cannot afford a dentist.

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