

Take a bite out of children's tooth decay

Did you know that tooth decay affects children in the United States more than any other chronic infectious disease?¹ But there are simple things that you can do to ensure your child doesn't end up as a tooth decay statistic. Here's some useful information to help you take a bite out of children's tooth decay.

What parents can do

- Take your child to the dentist. Usually, the dentist will want to see a child on his or her first birthday. At this first visit, your dentist can quickly check your child's teeth.
- Talk to your child's dentist about dental sealants. They protect teeth from decay.
- Encourage your children to eat regular nutritious meals and avoid frequent snacking between meals.
- Protect your child's teeth with toothpaste and drinking water that contains fluoride.

Signs and symptoms of tooth decay²

Healthy teeth should be all one color. If you see spots or stains on the teeth, take your child to the dentist.

Tips to encourage your kids to brush their teeth³

Not all children will enjoy brushing their teeth at first. Here are some tips to encourage children to take care of their teeth:

- Make it fun. Use a reward system to motivate older children. For instance, mark the number of times their teeth are brushed each week on the calendar and offer rewards for achievements.
- Encourage your child to brush his or her teeth for at least two minutes.
- If your child objects to the taste of toothpaste, try brushing without toothpaste. Next, introduce a children's low-dose fluoride toothpaste when the child accepts the taste.
- Give younger children a toothbrush as a toy.

Remember: Good oral health for your child means smiles for everyone!



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Children's Oral Health* (March 3, 2009): cdc.gov/OralHealth/topics/child.htm

² National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, *A Healthy Mouth for Your Baby* (June 18, 2009): nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/ToothDecay/AHealthyMouthforYourBaby.htm

³ Better Health Channel, *Toothbrushing - start it young* (March 2008): betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Toothbrushing_start_it_young



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