

# Happy, healthy mouths START AT HOME.

Teach your kids the importance of good oral health for a lifetime of healthy smiles.



## Question:

When should you start teaching your children about the importance of good oral care?

## Answer:

As soon as they start getting teeth.

The fact is dental decay is one of the most chronic infectious diseases among children in the U.S. And it's completely preventable.<sup>1</sup>

### The importance of brushing and flossing<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning, your child will need help learning how to care for teeth and gums. Ideally, you'll brush and floss their teeth at least until age 6. But by age 6 or 7, your child should be able to brush his or her own teeth twice a day, with your supervision until about age 10 or 11 to make sure they're doing a thorough job.

Flossing is equally important, though very young children can't really maneuver the floss between their teeth and gums until age 10 or 11. Even then, you should supervise.

### See your dentist at the sign of the first tooth

A healthy body includes a healthy mouth and teeth. Teaching your children good oral health from an early age can have lifelong implications. It's much easier to teach a young child good habits than it is to break an older child of bad ones. That's why it's up to you to start encouraging good oral hygiene, right from the start.

According to the Academy of General dentistry, a child should visit the dentist six months after the first teeth erupt. Your dentist will show you how to protect and maintain your little one's dental health. Because tooth decay can begin with your baby's very first tooth, see your dentist early to prevent dental disease and ensure your child remains cavity-free.<sup>3</sup>

**Remember: be a good role model for your kids by practicing good oral health habits yourself.**

## Simple Tips for a Happy, Healthy Mouth

### 1. Establish good oral health habits early

- **Brush.** Use toothpaste when your child is 12 months old. However, only use a pea-sized portion on the brush and press it into the bristles so your child won't swallow it.
- **Floss.** Begin as soon as the gaps between your child's teeth close.

### 2. Schedule regular dental visits

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012, August 30). *Children's oral health*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/topics/child.htm>
2. American Dental Association "Smile Smarts" Curriculum.
3. Academy of General Dentistry. (2011, February). *Baby's first steps to a healthy mouth*. Retrieved from <http://www.knowyourteeth.com/infobites/abc/article/?abc=b&iid=296&aid=9051>

**GO YOU**<sup>SM</sup>



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