

Give your child a healthy, happy smile





Pregnancy

Taking care of your mouth during pregnancy is very important for your health and the health of your unborn child. Having healthy teeth and gums may reduce your risk of having a premature or low birth weight baby.

Keep your mouth healthy during pregnancy



- **Brush your teeth at least twice per day with a soft toothbrush using fluoride toothpaste.**

- **Floss daily to remove germs between your teeth and gums.**



- During pregnancy, continue to visit your dentist or dental hygienist for regular checkups and cleanings. It is best for you to have your dental checkup in your **first or second trimester**. If treatment is required, it can be done at this time.

- Eat a healthy diet and follow the guidelines in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*.

Changes to your teeth and mouth during pregnancy

Morning sickness

Morning sickness can leave stomach acids in your mouth that can damage your teeth.

- If you vomit, rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash with fluoride as soon as possible. Rinsing can help protect your teeth.
- Try eating dry toast or unsalted crackers before getting out of bed in the morning to help prevent morning sickness.

Pregnancy gingivitis

Changes in hormone levels during pregnancy can cause swollen gums that bleed during brushing and flossing.

- If you develop gingivitis during pregnancy, continue to brush twice a day, floss, rinse with salt water and visit your dentist or dental hygienist.



Gingivitis

Caring for your child's mouth

Before teeth appear

- Breastfeeding may enhance jaw and mouth development.
- It is important to clean your baby's mouth even before they have teeth, by wiping your baby's gums morning and night with the corner of a clean washcloth.



When teeth begin to appear

Baby teeth are important for chewing food, learning to speak properly, holding space for adult teeth, appearance and overall health and well-being.

- Once your child's teeth begin to show, brush their teeth at least twice per day using a small soft toothbrush with tap water only.
- Do not give your child toothpaste until their third birthday, unless your dentist tells you to use toothpaste earlier.



At three years of age, start using fluoride toothpaste.

- Use a smear of toothpaste to brush your child's teeth.
- Make sure that your child does not swallow the toothpaste. Encourage your child to always spit out any extra toothpaste after brushing.
- Have your child rinse after brushing.



Age three to about seven

- From age three to seven a parent should guide their child's hand while brushing.
- Stand beside or behind your child and guide brushing in a small circular motion.



Thumb and finger sucking

Thumb or finger sucking is common for children, but after the age of four, it can affect the positioning of adult teeth.

- If thumb or finger sucking continues past the age of four, consult your dentist or dental hygienist.



Teething

Teething occurs when an infant's first teeth begin to show through their gums. This process usually begins anywhere from three to 12 months of age and may cause the following symptoms:

- drooling
- irritability
- placing their fingers and toys in their mouth
- changes in appetite and sleep patterns



Fever, diarrhea or a runny nose are **not typical** signs of teething. If your child has any of these symptoms, please talk to your doctor.

- For relief, you can massage your baby's gums with a clean finger and/or provide your child with a chilled (not frozen) teething ring.

IMPORTANT:



Do not use over-the-counter baby gum numbing gels or tablets.



Do not give teething biscuits to your baby. The biscuits contain sugar and can cause cavities, especially in new baby teeth.

Your child's first dental visit

Infants should have their first dental visit by the age of one, or shortly after their baby teeth begin to show.

Early dental checkups help make sure your child's teeth and gums are growing properly and teeth are not at risk for cavities.

Prepare your child for the first dental visit

- Have a positive attitude and set a good example for your child.
- Do not use phrases like "It won't hurt too much." This type of comment does not soothe your child—it creates anxiety.
- Allow the dental team to help your child feel comfortable when they visit the dentist—your dentist can help make your child's visit an enjoyable experience.

What to expect at your child's first dental visit

- Your child can experience sitting in a dental chair.
- You will be provided with tips on how to clean your child's mouth.
- A dental exam that may include lifting your child's lip to see their teeth. Depending on your child's age, this may be done with your child on your lap or in your arms.

Questions to ask your dental provider

- Are my child's teeth and gums healthy?
- What is my child's risk for getting a cavity?
- What can I do to keep my child's teeth healthy and free from cavities?
- How often should my child visit the dentist?



How your dentist can help prevent tooth decay

- Check teeth for early signs of decay.
- Educate you on good oral health behaviours.
- Clean, strengthen and protect your child's teeth by applying fluoride varnish and sealants.



Healthy eating and nutrition

Eating a balanced and nutritious diet is an important way to keep your mouth and teeth healthy. In fact, the health of your mouth is directly linked to your overall health.

To ensure a balanced diet, follow the guidelines set out in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.



Healthy snacking options that won't harm your teeth include vegetables, cheese, hummus and water.

Provide your child with tap water in between meals.



A diet with high levels of sugar can lead to cavities.

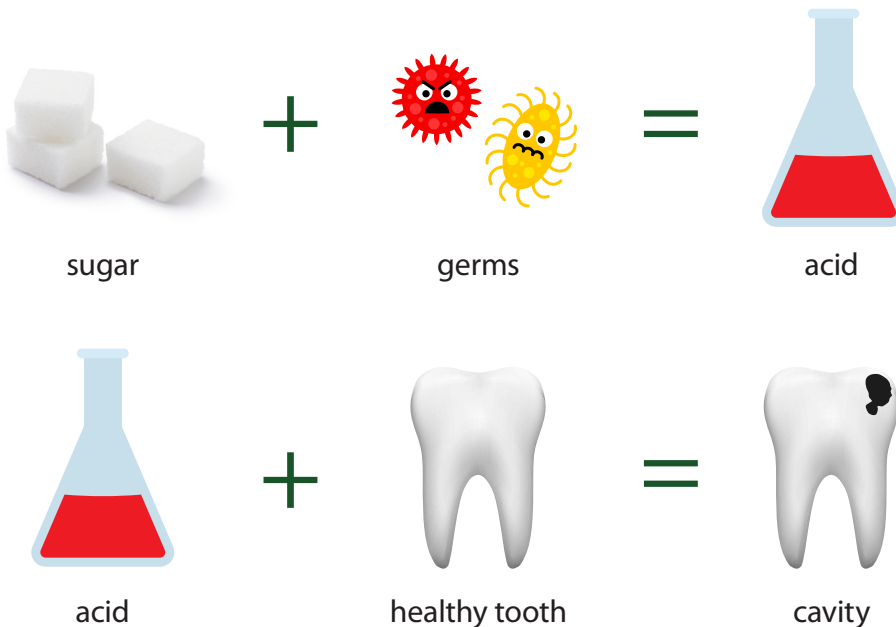
Foods that are high in sugar and stay in the mouth for a long time such as hard candy, and soft sticky foods such as toffee and gummies, can lead to tooth decay.

Your child is at greater risk of tooth decay if you feed them starchy snack foods like cookies or teething biscuits regularly.

If you give your child sugary or sticky food to eat, be sure to brush their teeth soon afterwards.



This is how a cavity develops



Early childhood tooth decay

Early childhood tooth decay are cavities found on the upper front teeth of children younger than six years of age. Check your child's teeth regularly by lifting their lip.

Germes can be introduced into a child's mouth by parents or caregivers through the sharing of utensils or by licking soothers, which may contribute to the development of early childhood tooth decay.

Use of a pacifier (soother) is not recommended as it can interfere with breastfeeding. Many babies never use a pacifier.

If you decide to use a pacifier, wait until breastfeeding is well established.



Signs and symptoms of early childhood tooth decay

- pain (toothache)
- trouble chewing food and swallowing
- problems with speech
- resists smiling or speaking in social situations

Baby teeth lost too early may cause adult teeth to come in crooked and crowded.



How you can help prevent early childhood tooth decay



- Check your child's teeth regularly by lifting their lip. If you see white, brown or black spots on your baby's teeth take your child to the dentist.



- If your baby is using a bottle, do not put them to bed with it.



- Take your baby to a dentist for a visit by the age of one, or within six months of their first tooth appearing.



- If your baby is using a soother, do not dip it in honey, sugar, or any other sweet liquid.



- For toddlers, if you choose to use a sippy cup, only put water in it; juice, milk and pop may lead to cavities.



- If your baby is using a soother, run it under cold water to clean it. Do not put a baby's soother in your mouth.

Get help with the cost of dental care

If your child is eligible, you may be able to get help with the cost of dental care. Healthy Smiles Ontario provides free dental treatment and regular check-ups for children 17 and under who qualify for the program. Visit **halton.ca** to learn more.



FREE
DENTAL PROGRAM FOR
ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND
YOUTH 17 AND UNDER.

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smiles
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Help prevent oral health problems before they start!
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