

bky for kids

11 things you can do to help your child have healthy teeth

1. **Keep your own mouth healthy.** The bacteria that cause cavities can be transferred from your mouth to your child's every time you share a fork or spoon, drink from the same glass, or clean a pacifier with your mouth. Avoid these practices and you will reduce their risk of tooth decay.
2. **Never put them to bed with anything to drink except water.** He or she won't swallow the last mouthful as they fall asleep, and it sits on their teeth all night.
3. **Wipe their mouth out after each feeding to remove any formula, breast milk or food.**
4. **Brush their teeth twice a day.** Until he or she is old enough to write clearly, or cannot do an adequate job of brushing their own teeth.
5. **Floss their teeth at least once a day.** If you cannot see space between their back teeth, the toothbrush cannot clean between them.
6. **Avoid sticky snacks.** Besides candy, things like dried fruit, raisins, fruit snacks, and sugared cereals will cling to the teeth longer than other foods and increase your child's risk of cavities. Serve these foods with meals or at a time when you can brush their teeth right after they are done eating, and limit these snacks to only a couple of times a week.
7. **Stop the pacifier, thumb, or finger habit by their fourth birthday.** A pacifier is easiest to stop because it can be taken away.
8. **Do not let your child "cruise" around with their food.** Each time they put food in their mouth they provide food to the cavity, causing bacteria. The bacteria produce acid that weakens teeth. This reaction lasts for 20 minutes every time something is consumed. If you let your child to cruise around with a baggie of 10 crackers, and they eat one every 20 minutes, they are at risk of decay for over three hours. But if they sit down and eat all of the crackers in 10 minutes, in just 30 minutes they are no longer at risk.
9. **Wear a mouth guard.** Mouth protection should be worn for any contact sport or high speed activity. This includes sledding, bicycling, skateboarding, skating, soccer, basketball, baseball, hockey, horseback riding, and more.
10. **Only use a fluoride containing toothpaste for children old enough to spit it all out. (Usually around age 6).** Younger children should use a toddler training toothpaste. No child needs more than a pea-sized amount of toothpaste to get their teeth clean. The right amount of fluoride makes teeth stronger, but too much can weaken teeth.
11. **The American Academy of Pediatrics and The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommend that children have their first dental exam by their first birthday, and begin regular six-month check ups after two years of age.** Contact your local Pediatric Dentist to set up an appointment.