

Balancing Good Oral Health

Cavity Fighters

Good oral health and nutrition will bring your child's oral care into balance.

- Brush teeth with a rice-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste (pea-sized for older children) twice a day. Always brush before bedtime.
- Brush with a small, soft toothbrush, being sure to clean all tooth surfaces, gums and the tongue.
- When teeth touch, begin to floss your child's teeth.
- Your child may be ready to practice brushing at about age 4 or 5. Children still need your help brushing until they are 8 years old or until they can tie their shoes. Brush and floss your own teeth and have regular dental check-ups, too. You are a role model for your child.



Cavity Causers

- **Frequent snacking on carbohydrates** puts your child more at risk for cavities. Frequent sugary treats and high-carbohydrate snacking is a problem. This includes cookies, crackers and soda. Your child's mouth needs time between snacks to recover.
- **Sharing food or drinks and putting things in your mouth and then your child's mouth** can introduce germs into your baby's mouth.
- **Reduced saliva flow** means a child's mouth cannot fight cavities as well. Saliva helps clean the teeth and blocks the acids that cause cavities. Some medical conditions and medications (such as some asthma and behavior management medicines) can reduce saliva. If your child is on medication for either of these conditions, talk to your doctor or dentist about what you can do to protect her teeth.

Nutrition and Oral Health

Healthy nutrition

- Provide your child and family with healthy meals.
- Offer low-carbohydrate snacks. Good choices include fresh fruits, vegetables, cheese and whole-grain snacks. See the tooth-friendly snack list on page 27.
- When a sugary treat is offered, it is best at mealtime. And, be sure to brush your child's teeth afterward. If brushing is not possible, rinse her mouth with water.

Fluoride

Fluoride can help prevent cavities and can even help heal early tooth decay.

- Find out if your water is fluoridated. If it is not, your child may need to get fluoride from another source, such as fluoride drops or tablets from your dentist or doctor.
- Use fluoridated toothpaste.
- Ask your dentist or doctor about fluoride varnish to protect against cavities. The varnish is "painted" on the child's teeth during a dental check-up or at the doctor's office during a well-child visit.

Regular dental checkups

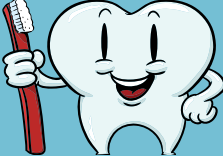

- Have your children's teeth checked by their first birthdays and make regular dental appointments as they grow.
- Quickly get help if you suspect any problems.
- Ask your doctor about any medicines your child takes to see if they could affect saliva and what you can do about it.

What nutrition means to your child's oral health

It is the frequency of unhealthy snacking, not just the amount of sugar or carbohydrates in any single snack, that makes snacking harmful. As long as your child has an overall healthy diet, eating sweets just on special occasions is not a problem. If your child sips fruit juices or eats starchy snacks all afternoon, that IS a problem. Teeth need time to rest and recover.

Snack healthy

Learn more about tooth-friendly snacks in the chart below:

 <i>Tooth-friendly Snacks</i>	 <i>Tooth-unfriendly Snacks</i>
<p><i>Fresh fruits and vegetables are tooth friendly snacks. Be sure to choose snacks that are safe for children your child's age.</i></p>	<p><i>If it is very sweet, sticky or high in carbohydrates, it is probably an unfriendly snack. If your child uses a sippy cup, fill it with water only.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cheese ● Baby carrots ● Apple slices ● Cucumbers ● Nuts ● Yogurt ● Whole grain cereals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cookies ● Candy ● Crackers ● Sticky fruit snacks ● Juice or juice drinks ● Soda ● Sugary cereals
<p>After a tooth-unfriendly snack is eaten, brush your child's teeth. If brushing is not possible, rinse your child's mouth with water.</p> <p>Healthy meals and eating habits are vital to your child's oral health AND overall health.</p>	