

# 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

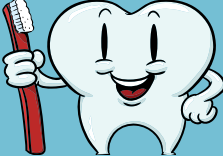

- Have your children's teeth checked by their first birthdays and make regular dental appointments as they grow.
- Quickly get help if you suspect any problems.
- Ask your doctor about any medicines your child takes to see if they could affect saliva and what you can do about it.

## What nutrition means to your child's oral health

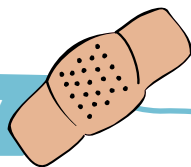
It is the frequency of unhealthy snacking, not just the amount of sugar or carbohydrates in any single snack, that makes snacking harmful. As long as your child has an overall healthy diet, eating sweets just on special occasions is not a problem. If your child sips fruit juices or eats starchy snacks 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"> <li>● Cheese</li> <li>● Baby carrots</li> <li>● Apple slices</li> <li>● Cucumbers</li> <li>● Nuts</li> <li>● Yogurt</li> <li>● Whole grain cereals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cookies</li> <li>● Candy</li> <li>● Crackers</li> <li>● Sticky fruit snacks</li> <li>● Juice or juice drinks</li> <li>● Soda</li> <li>● Sugary cereals</li> </ul>
<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>	

## Sometimes Accidents Happen!



### If a tooth is knocked out:

- If it is a baby tooth, take your child and the tooth to a dentist right away. The tooth cannot be put back in, but the dentist can determine whether any care is needed.
- If it is a permanent tooth, pick up the tooth by its biting end (not the root). Do not wash it or handle it. Gently rinse with milk if available, and place the tooth back in the hole in the gum until you can get to a dentist. If the tooth cannot be put back into the hole, place it in a container of cold milk. Go to a dentist immediately.

### If a tooth is broken:

- Save any tooth fragments you can find. Place tooth fragments in a cup of milk or water.
- Rinse the injured tooth and area with warm water to remove any dirt or debris. Place a clean cold compress on the injured area.
- Take your child and the tooth fragments to the dentist immediately.

*"When Patrick started playing basketball, one of the first things I bought him was a mouth guard. I figured it would save me a trip to the dentist one day. And it made him look like a 'pro' out on the court."*

– Tom, Ridgefield, WA

## Protecting Your Child's Mouth



### What you should know about safety and injuries

A key part of protecting your child's smile is helping to prevent injuries to her mouth and teeth. Injuries, even to baby teeth, can have a permanent effect on oral health and may contribute to the need for orthodontic care (like braces).

Supervising your child during play, making your home safer, and using mouth guards when she plays sports are all part of your child's essential safety.

### Safety at home

- Childproof your home when your child is learning to walk and climb. For example, limit access to stairs.
- Do not let your child run with anything in her mouth (for example, a toy, a pencil, a popsicle or a toothbrush).
- Help prevent falls by teaching your toddler to use climbing toys correctly and to climb down from furniture safely.
- Start the helmet habit by having your child wear one when riding toys.
- Watch your child during play and make sure other caregivers do the same.
- Buckle your child into a proper car seat on every car ride. A minor crash or even a swerve could result in a fall that injures your child's teeth.