

Back-to-school time is a great reminder for the entire family to visit the dentist !

Dental care should begin at birth. Even our youngest children can experience dental problems and it interrupts children's ability to eat, play and learn, but can be avoided with proper care.

Healthy teeth tips for the littlest students (infants and toddlers):

⇒ **Start cleaning teeth early.**

As soon as the first tooth appears, begin cleaning the tooth and gums by wiping with a clean, damp cloth after feedings. When more teeth come in, switch to a small, soft toothbrush after meals and especially before bedtime. When your child is two years old, begin using fluoridated toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice. Even the most nutritious food (breast milk, formula, milk and soft baby food) can cause decay if left on the teeth.

⇒ **Clean your child's pacifier, bottle or eating utensils with soap and water, not with your own mouth.**

Adults may pass cavity-causing bacteria from their own mouth to their children.

⇒ **Encourage your child to eat nutritious meals and snacks and get plenty of sleep.**

The mouth is the opening to the rest of the body and all that enters affects the entire body. Sugary and sticky treats, such as pop and candy provide no nutritious value and can cause cavities. Nutritious foods and plenty of sleep help bodies grow big, strong and ready to learn!

⇒ **Talk to your dentist, doctor or other healthcare provider about your child's healthy mouth.**

It's important for children to see a dentist by age one *and* before problems arise. If a dentist is not available, encourage your child's healthcare provider to look over your child's teeth for signs of early problems. Your dentist or healthcare provider may also prescribe the use of a fluoride supplement.

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