

Establishing Comprehensive Oral Health Practices in Children

Guide to effective oral care routines, and strategies to handle oral health emergencies

Good oral health extends beyond just strong teeth and gums; it is the foundation for overall health and well-being

Healthy habits to prevent tooth decay

Tooth brushing routine



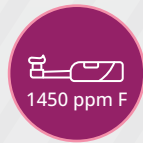
Encourage brushing for 2 minutes twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste and a manual or electric toothbrush*

*There is scientific evidence to recommend oscillating-rotating electric toothbrushes for children. Oscillating-rotating electric toothbrush users experience 1.4 times lower caries incidence compared to those using a manual toothbrush.

Use a toothpaste with an age-appropriate fluoride concentration



Between 2-6 years



Over 6 years



Help and supervise brushing until at least the age of 7 years



Ensure regular dental check ups for your child

Encourage healthy eating habits



Provide a nutritious and balanced diet



Avoid giving sugary foods and sugary, acidic drinks before bedtime and between meals

Children learn by observing and imitating their caregivers. Here is how you can lead by example:



Stress on oral health as a priority



Eat a healthy, balanced diet



Schedule regular dental check-ups



Establish a healthy lifestyle
• Avoid smoking or tobacco
• Limit alcohol consumption



Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride-containing toothpaste, e.g., stannous fluoride

Tip: Establishing good oral health and hygiene practices during childhood can ensure a lifetime of good oral and overall health

Here are some dental emergencies that your child may face and how they should be handled



Broken, loose, or avulsed teeth



Tooth is tender, with or without bleeding

- Reassure your child and visit a dental professional



Toothache and sensitivity to hot, cold, or sweet foods and drinks

- Pain relief medications are recommended
- Seek urgent dental care



Tooth fracture, with or without bleeding from the pulp

- Provide your child with medication to relieve the pain
- Seek urgent dental care



Displaced tooth

- Try to put the tooth back into its original position by applying gentle pressure with your fingers or ask your child to bite down and hold the tooth in place
- Seek urgent dental care



Fallen (or avulsed) tooth

- Try putting the tooth back into its original position
- If the tooth cannot be put back immediately, keep it moist, store in milk, or wrap in a clean wet cloth without touching the root of the tooth
- Seek urgent dental care; repositioning should be done as soon as possible, ideally within a couple of hours



Jaw fracture

- Provide first aid for external soft tissue injury
- Immediately take your child to the emergency room for timely medical attention

Strategies to prevent and reduce injuries to teeth

Sport activities were found to be responsible for 18% of overall oral trauma

Children participating in contact sports should:



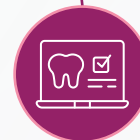
Use a well-fitted helmet



Use a face shield



Be counselled and referred for fabrication of mouthguards (stock, boil and bite, or custom fit)



Consult with dental care professionals

Tip: Not all dental problems have easy fixes; therefore, dental professionals recommend preventive measures that are durable and cost-effective

Orthodontic problems in children

Common causes for malocclusions



Issues like crossbites, underbites and overbites, crowding, open bites, and malocclusion or tooth malposition



May affect appearance, chewing, and speech, and lead to tooth decay, loss of teeth, and problems with the jaw

Common causes for orthodontic problems

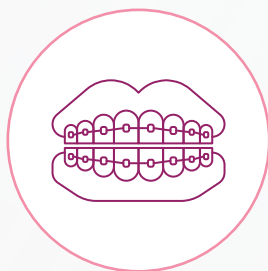


Inherited genetic traits



Unhealthy habits

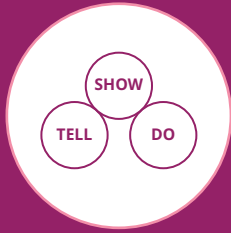
Treatment may include:



Use of braces, clear plastic teeth aligners, or functional appliances

Addressing dental fear or anxiety that can prevent or delay care

Parents and caregivers can employ the following techniques to reduce dental anxiety in their child:



Adopt the tell-show-do approach by taking the time to inform your child about the dental procedure and show them what will happen using models or demonstrations



Use distraction techniques like music, virtual reality goggles, sensory adapted dental environment



Communicate with your child and explain the process, seek their permission before any procedure, reassure them, and be open to negotiating aspects of the visit



Provide positive reinforcement by encouraging and praising your child for their bravery and cooperation during the dental visit



Offer parental presence and support by accompanying your child to the dental appointment

Key messages

- Oral care during childhood builds the foundation for a lifetime of good oral health and overall well-being
- Prevention of oral problems is a more durable and cost-effective strategy than treatment
- Counselling regarding prevention of oral trauma by using mouth protectors, and training in proper emergency measures is essential for children participating in high-contact sports
- Identifying orthodontic concerns early on, together with advanced dental corrective procedures, prevents long-term problems in permanent dentition
- Regular check-ups and parental commitment can aid the timely detection and treatment of dental problems

Further reading:

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