Oral Health Management in Children
Common oral health issues, oral care measures, and the role of caregivers in preventive management

Oral health is an important component of overall health and well-being

Poor oral health negatively affects the daily functions and quality of life of children and their caregivers by causing:
- Sleep disturbance
- Nutritional deficiencies and impaired growth
- Oral pain and impaired growth
- Difficulty in biting and chewing
- Speech impairment
- Low self-esteem
- Absence from school and play activities, and poor academic performance
- Difficulty in social interactions and communication
- Increased healthcare expenses

Here are the common oral health issues in children

- Abnormal tooth development
- Malocclusion or misalignment of teeth
- Plaque accumulation
- Gum disease
- Dental trauma
- Cavities
- Erosion

Preventive oral health and hygiene habits from early childhood lay the foundation for long-term oral health and overall well-being

Visit https://oralhealth.knowledgehub.wiley.com/children-home for additional resources
What is the impact of primary teeth health on permanent teeth?

- Untreated cavities in primary teeth can affect the health of permanent teeth.
- Chewing may be difficult when primary teeth are loose or missing.

Permanent teeth emerge from around 6 years and replace all primary teeth by 12 years.

Emergence of teeth can cause discomfort and pain.

It is recommended to brush gently around loose teeth or sensitive areas.

Consumption of foods and drinks with free and/or added sugar

Unaddressed dental problems and dental anxiety

Insufficient fluoride exposure

Lack of adequate dental routine owing to less importance often given to primary teeth

Poor dental hygiene

Frequent snacking between meals

Here are some factors contributing to dental cavities

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Look out for the signs and symptoms of dental cavities

- Visible white spots on enamel due to demineralisation
- Tooth discolouration
- Pain or sensitivity after eating or drinking
- Holes on the tooth surface
- Intermittent toothache
Some precautionary dental care measures that can help

Avoid offering sweets as rewards, for comfort, or to control tantrums
Replace snacks containing added sugar with fruits
Offer balanced and nutritious meals
Create a preventive oral care routine
Schedule regular visits with a paediatric dental professional

Here are some oral care recommendations to follow

Brush young children’s teeth or supervise older children as they brush their teeth
Ensure that they brush twice daily for 2 minutes using 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 pea-sized amount of a fluoride-containing toothpaste
- Check your child’s toothpaste for fluoride concentration—adhere to age-recommended fluoride doses for maximum benefit
  - 2 to 6 years: 1,000 ppm
  - Above 6 years: 1,450 ppm

Schedule regular dental check-ups
Ask a dental professional to consider whether applying a fluoride varnish is useful for your child

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Children model the behaviour of the adults that surround them, including parents, caregivers, and teachers.

Parents' knowledge and oral care behaviour are crucial to fostering good oral hygiene practices in children at home.

Parents are typically the primary decision-makers regarding children's health.

Involvement of teachers at school can encourage children and help cultivate preventive dental care practices.

Teachers may have a notable role in shaping children’s habits, sometimes being more influential than parents.

Here are some ways to encourage good oral health practices:

- **Oral health promotion campaigns in schools**
- **Interactive programs to encourage good oral health practices**
- **Educational sessions on the importance of dental hygiene and the benefits of brushing**
- **Active transfer of knowledge regarding oral health using creative media like books, songs, and videos**
- **Activities related to oral hygiene such as supervised toothbrushing in schools**

**Key messages**

- **Oral hygiene measures adopted in early childhood can prevent dental problems and ensure a lifetime of good oral and overall health.**
- **Parents, caregivers, and teachers are integral in fostering good oral care practices in children.**

**Further reading**