

Good oral care for children

Oral diseases, such as tooth decay and gum disease, are widespread and preventable. Through proper self-care, regular dental check-ups and managing risk factors, good oral health and general health can be secured.

Do you help your children practice good oral care? See how many items in the checklist you can tick and use the tips provided to **ACT ON MOUTH HEALTH.**

☐ **Do you know when you should start an oral care routine for your child?**

Start oral care for your baby during the first few days after birth by wiping the gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth at least twice a day. Wipe their gums, especially after feedings and before bedtime. Avoid letting your baby sleep with a feeding bottle in their mouth. Start to clean your baby's teeth as soon as the first tooth pushes through.

☐ **Does your child brush their teeth twice a day?**

Your child should brush their teeth for two minutes twice daily to help reduce their risk of tooth decay and gum disease. They should brush in a circular motion, once in the morning after breakfast and before they go to sleep. Ensure your child does not eat anything after brushing their teeth at night. Your child should be supervised until they learn to brush their teeth correctly on their own.

☐ **Do you know how much toothpaste your child should use?**

If your child is younger than 3-years old, smear a small amount of fluoride toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice, on their toothbrush. If your child is 3-years or older, smear a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste on their toothbrush.

☐ **Does your child use a toothpaste containing fluoride?**

Your child should brush their teeth using a fluoride toothpaste. Check the packaging before buying your toothpaste to ensure it contains the amount of fluoride recommended in your country. Your child's dentist/primary healthcare provider can also advise on the correct concentration of fluoride needed.

☐ **Do you know whether your child should rinse their mouth after brushing their teeth?**

Your child should not rinse their mouth with water straight after brushing, they should spit out any excess toothpaste instead. This avoids the concentrated fluoride in the remaining toothpaste from being washed away or diluted and reinforces its preventive effects.



☐ **Do you know how often you should replace your child's toothbrush?**

For the best oral care, your child's toothbrush should be replaced every 3 months or when the bristles are splayed out, worn-looking or missing.

☐ **Do you know how sucking on a pacifier or thumb can affect your child's mouth?**

Sucking on a pacifier or thumb for too long affects the development of your child's mouth and teeth. Do not use a pacifier after your child turns 2 ½ years old and never dip it in sugar or honey. Discourage thumb-sucking and extended use of the pacifier.

☐ **Does your child eat a healthy diet that limits foods and drinks high in sugar?**

Limit your child's intake of sugars to approximately 3 teaspoons daily. Ensure they do not consume excessive amounts of sugar from snacks, processed food and soft drinks to help prevent dental caries (tooth decay) and other oral diseases. Place only breastmilk, formula, milk or water in bottles. Refrain from adding any form of sugar to the milk in the bottle; avoid filling the bottle with liquids such as sugar water, fruit juice or soft drinks; and encourage your child to drink from a cup by their first birthday.

☐ **Do you know how to protect your child's teeth and mouth during contact sports?**

Your child may need to wear a professionally-made mouthguard whenever they play a sport that involves physical contact, moving objects or regular falls and blows. A mouthguard is a rubber-like cover which fits exactly over the teeth and gums, cushioning and protecting them from fracture, displacement or loss. Speak to your dentist or primary healthcare provider for guidance on whether your child needs a mouthguard depending on the sport they play.

☐ **Does your child have regular dental check-ups?**

Take your child to the dentist/primary healthcare provider after their first tooth has pushed through and no later than their first birthday. Schedule regular dental check-ups; your child's dentist can advise on how often you need to book an appointment, depending on their specific needs. Just like other major diseases, prevention, early detection and treatment are key to ensuring the best outcomes and reducing the risk for oral diseases and associated health complications.



SCORE

Count the number of boxes you ticked

/10

Good oral health habits start early.

Tooth decay can start as soon as the first tooth appears so

ACT ON MOUTH HEALTH and put into practice the tips provided to protect your children's mouth and body.

DISCLAIMER

- Sugar in this document refers to free sugars that are added to foods and drinks by the manufacturer, cook, or consumer, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juice and fruit juice concentrates. It does not refer to sugar that is naturally present in fruits, vegetables and milk.
- These tips are based on FDI global recommendations and your national guidelines may differ, so please consult with your dentist/primary healthcare provider or National Dental Association to ensure they comply with local recommendations.



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