



## Brush up on a Healthy Habit

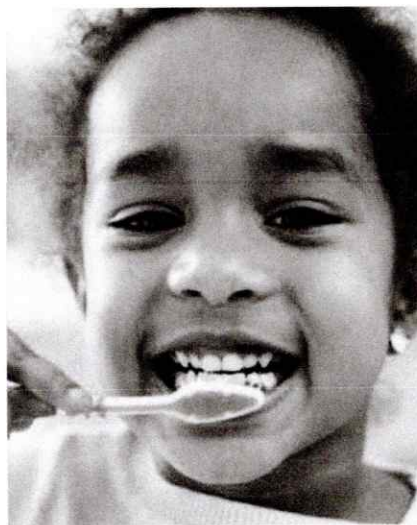
**TOOTH DECAY** is the most prevalent chronic childhood disease in America, and it's preventable! Every February Children's Dental Health Month promotes the benefits of good oral health for children and their caregivers. This year the slogan is "Brush and clean in between to build a healthy smile."

Alarming, almost half of all children have cavities by the time they enter kindergarten and those with poor oral health are 3 times more likely to miss school. Cavities and more severe oral health concerns add up to a lot of time and stress for both children and caregivers, not to mention the expense. It is estimated that every dollar spent on preventive care equates to \$8 to \$50 saved in emergency or restorative care. **Help children have healthy teeth by remembering the 2-2-2 rule:**

- Visit a dentist 2 times per year
- Brush and floss 2 times a day
- Always brush for 2 whole minutes!

### TOOTH DECAY IS INFECTIOUS

Research shows *Streptococcus mutans*, the bacteria that causes tooth decay, can be passed along from person to person. So think twice before you clean off a dropped pacifier with your own mouth or share utensils, drinks



or toothbrushes with your child. Instead, use soap and water to clean off pacifiers or carry a backup in case of an accidental drop. Be sure everyone in the household uses their own cup, fork, toothbrush, etc.

### BABY TEETH MATTER

The idea that baby teeth will just fall out so they aren't important is false. Baby teeth have an incredibly important job of helping children chew and speak and also make up their beautiful smiles. Additionally they hold space for the permanent teeth that are growing under the gums. When a tooth is lost too early or is removed due to severe

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## DID YOU KNOW...

- February is National Children's Dental Health Month.
- More than half of children will be affected by tooth decay before age five.
- More than 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental-related conditions.
- Contrary to popular belief, George Washington's dentures were made from human teeth, gold, hippopotamus tusk and ivory—not wood.
- February is American Heart Month.
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the US causing 1 in 4 deaths annually.
- February is Cancer Prevention Month.
- Adding cruciferous vegetables, like Brussels sprouts, broccoli and cabbage to your diet can help lower risk for cancers of the colon, mouth, esophagus and stomach.

dentalassociates.com,  
mycarolinadentist.com, American Heart Association, American Institute for Cancer Research

### Quotable Quotes

*"One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating."*

– Luciano Pavarotti

## INSIDE:

- Why Most Sore Throats, Coughs & Runny Noses Don't Need Antibiotics
- Have a Heart Healthy Valentine's Day
- Recipes



## Brush up on a Healthy Habit

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decay, permanent teeth have a difficult time finding room when they are ready to emerge, often causing crowding or crooked teeth that can be expensive to fix and can contribute to low self-esteem.

It's important to care for baby teeth from the start. Begin by cleaning the inside of a baby's mouth with a wet gauze or washcloth from birth. As soon as teeth appear, decay can occur. For children under 3 years, start brushing with a child-size toothbrush and a "smear" of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice. For children 3-6 years old, use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and brush twice daily. Supervise brushing to ensure good habits and remind children not to swallow.

### FORGET RINSING

"Spit, don't rinse" is the recommended best practice for good oral health. Rinsing after we brush washes away all the fluoride that was just applied to the teeth. It is better to spit and not rinse after brushing to ensure fluoride will remain on the teeth and improve its effectiveness.

### SEE A DENTIST SOONER AND REGULARLY

As soon as a child has teeth, they can get cavities. Your child's year of firsts now includes a trip to the dentist. Plan to see a dentist after the first tooth comes through, no later than their first birthday. Then keep up the good habits by scheduling regular visits every 6 months thereafter.

### DON'T FORGET THE FLOSS

If two teeth touch it's time to start flossing. Plaque can build up between teeth and along the gum line where a toothbrush can't reach. You can floss for your child by using traditional floss or the plastic flossers until they have the dexterity to do it themselves. It does not matter whether it is done before or after brushing as long as it is done!

### BRUSHING AT THE TABLE IS A HEALTHY PRACTICE

Many Head Start and other child care settings have incorporated daily brushing into their routine. It can happen seated at a table or on the floor, and because of the new recommendation of not rinsing, it isn't necessary to have access to a sink. Brushing in a group along with an adult role model provides a great opportunity for preschool children to learn how to brush properly. Simply provide each child with their own toothbrush (labeled with their name) and a small cup with a dab of toothpaste on the rim. Show them how to scoop the toothpaste from the rim onto their toothbrush, brush all of their teeth for two minutes and use the cup to spit when finished.

Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Be a positive role model and teach children good habits from the beginning to help them grow up with a healthy mouth and beautiful smile!

— Rachel O'Neal  
Child Health and Nutrition Specialist