

Your Child's Teeth from Ages 6 to 12



As children's bodies grow, their jaws and faces change, too. Over time, their baby (primary) teeth will be replaced by adult (permanent) teeth. Both baby and adult teeth help a child eat, speak and smile. It's important to take good care of your child's teeth all during childhood. This brochure will tell you how.

Changes to Expect in Your Child's Smile

At about age five or six, children begin to lose their top and bottom front teeth, called the incisors (in-SYE-sors). Between ages six and 12, they will usually lose all 20 primary teeth. By the age of 21, up to 32 permanent teeth will come in to replace them.

The first permanent teeth usually come in between ages six and seven. These big, bumpy teeth at the back of the mouth are called molars. After this, your child will have a mix of primary and permanent teeth for a while. During this time the smile can look a little uneven, with some big teeth, some small teeth and even some missing teeth. But try not to worry. Things often even out once all the permanent teeth are in place.

The chart below tells the names of adult (permanent) teeth. The pictures show when each tooth usually erupts (comes in). However, not all children get the same teeth at the same times. Your child's teeth may erupt earlier or later than these charts.

Permanent Teeth

Upper Teeth		Erupt
Central incisor		7-8 yrs.
Lateral incisor		8-9 yrs.
Canine (cuspid)		11-12 yrs.
First premolar (first bicuspid)		10-11 yrs.
Second premolar (second bicuspid)		10-12 yrs.
First molar		6-7 yrs.
Second molar		12-13 yrs.
Third molar (wisdom tooth)		17-21 yrs.
Lower Teeth		Erupt
Third molar (wisdom tooth)		17-21 yrs.
Second molar		11-13 yrs.
First molar		6-7 yrs.
Second premolar (2nd bicuspid)		11-12 yrs.
First premolar (first bicuspid)		10-12 yrs.
Canine (cuspid)		9-10 yrs.
Lateral incisor		7-8 yrs.
Central incisor		6-7 yrs.

Diet and Your Child's Teeth

What we eat, and how often, can affect our teeth. That's because plaque constantly forms on the teeth. When we have food or drinks that contain sugar, the bacteria make acids that can attack tooth enamel. The stickiness of plaque keeps the harmful acids against the teeth, which can result in tooth decay. Snacking often may mean more acid attacks and a higher risk for tooth decay.

Try to limit snacks for your child. Save sweets for mealtime, when the mouth makes more saliva to help rinse out food particles. If your child does need a snack between meals, offer nutritious foods from the main food groups. The teeth, bones and soft tissues of the mouth need a well balanced diet. For more information about healthy foods and drinks, see www.choosemyplate.gov.

Protect Teeth with Sealants

A sealant is a material that is applied to the teeth where decay occurs most often—the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. These teeth have pits and grooves that are hard to clean, because toothbrush bristles cannot reach into them. The sealant bonds to the tooth and protects teeth from plaque and acid attacks.

Sealing a tooth is fast and painless. Sealants can last several years before they need to be reapplied. Ask your dentist if sealants will help your child.



Tooth surface before a sealant is applied



Tooth surface protected

Produced in cooperation with the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

Sealant photos courtesy of Dr. Adam A. Francois



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Brushing Tips

Cleaning your child's teeth is an important step toward preventing cavities. **Brush and floss your child's teeth until he or she is at least six years old.** By age six or seven, children should be able to brush their own teeth while you watch. When first teaching your child how to brush, you may wish to stand behind him or her and hold the brush. This can help your child learn the right way to brush.

Make choosing a toothbrush a fun activity for you and your child. Child-sized toothbrushes are easiest for kids to use. Let your child pick the color and design. You can also ask your dentist if there is a powered toothbrush that is right for your child.

Teeth should be brushed twice a day. By around age 10 or 11, most children should be able to brush their teeth without supervision. If you're not sure if your child is ready, talk to your dentist for advice. Keep in mind that each child is different, and they are ready for different habits at different ages.

Here are some tips for proper brushing:

- The ADA recommends that you use a pea-sized drop of toothpaste for children between 2 and 6 years old.
- Place the toothbrush against the gums.
- Move the brush back and forth gently in short (tooth-wide) strokes. Brush the outer surfaces of each tooth, upper and lower. Repeat the same method in the inside surfaces and chewing surfaces of the teeth.
- Finish by brushing the tongue to help freshen breath and remove bacteria.



Flossing Tips

Flossing is an important part of cleaning teeth. Your dentist and hygienist can show you and your child how to floss. Flossing removes plaque (sounds like PLAK, a sticky film of bacteria) from between the teeth where toothbrush bristles can't reach.

Flossing is not easy for children to do by themselves. The ADA recommends that you floss your child's teeth until he or she can do it alone, around age 10 or 11. When your child is ready to floss—with your supervision—show him or her how to hold the floss and gently clean between the teeth. Talk to your dentist about your child's teeth to see if he's flossing properly.

Here are some tips for proper flossing. Don't forget to floss at least once a day!

- Use about a foot and a half of floss. Wind most of it around the middle fingers of both hands. Hold the floss between the thumbs and forefingers. Use a gentle, back-and-forth motion to guide the floss between the teeth.
- Curve the floss into a C-shape and guide it into the space between the gum and tooth until you feel resistance. Gently scrape the floss against the side of the tooth.
- Repeat these steps on each tooth. Don't forget the backs of the last teeth in each corner of the mouth.



Look for oral care products with the American Dental Association's Seal of Acceptance. The Seal is your signal that the product meets the ADA's standards for safety and effectiveness.

Fluoride, Nature's Cavity Fighter

Fluoride (sounds like FLOOR-ide) is a mineral that strengthens teeth and protects them from decay. It occurs naturally in some drinking water. If you live in an area with little or no fluoride in the tap water, your dentist or physician may prescribe fluoride supplements. In areas where the tap water has the amount of fluoride shown to help stop decay, children should not take fluoride supplements. Fluoride is also found in many types of toothpastes, mouth rinses and treatments applied in the dental office.

Talk to the dentist about your child's fluoride needs. Be sure to tell your child's dentist if you use bottled water or a water treatment system at home.

Braces and Bad Bites

A bad bite, or malocclusion (mal-oh-CLUE-shun), is when the teeth are crowded, crooked or out of line, or the jaws don't meet properly. A bad bite may first be noticed between the ages of 6 and 12, when the adult (permanent) teeth are starting to come in.

Here are problems that can occur with a malocclusion:

- It's more difficult to keep teeth and gums clean, and this may increase the risk of tooth decay and gum disease.
- Crooked, crowded teeth may keep the jaws from developing properly.
- Some severe malocclusions may even keep a person from eating and speaking normally.
- Teeth that are out of line are more likely to get worn down than healthy, straight teeth.
- A bad bite or crooked teeth may make children feel less confident about their looks.

Early treatment may help prevent a bad bite or make it less severe. That's why it is a good idea for children to have their bites checked by a dentist before the age of seven. If braces or another treatment are needed, the dentist may refer your child to an orthodontist (a dentist with a specialty in treating bite problems).



Prevent Dental Injuries

When it comes to protecting your child's smile during active sports, a properly fitted mouthguard is a key piece of athletic gear. Mouthguards cushion impact that may otherwise cause broken teeth, jaw injuries, or cuts to the lip, tongue or face.

Mouthguards are most commonly used in contact sports, such as boxing, football, hockey and lacrosse. However, even in non-contact sports like gymnastics or skateboarding, mouthguards help prevent mouth and jaw injuries.

Your dentist can make you or your child a custom mouthguard that is comfortable and protects the jaw. Since treating a sports-related dental injury can cost thousands of dollars, a custom mouthguard is money well spent. Discuss types of mouthguards with your dentist and select one that works for your needs and budget.

A Healthy Smile for Life

Now you know why good oral hygiene and having a healthy, balanced diet are important for children. You can start them off with a dental care routine. As children get older and start taking care of their own teeth, make sure they brush and floss well each day.

By following the tips in this brochure, you can help your child avoid decay and disease. **Don't wait to take your child to the dentist until pain or a dental emergency happens.** Regular dental exams and professional cleanings can help your child have a lifetime of healthy smiles.