

Healthy mouth, healthy child

Taking care of their teeth and gums is vital to children's long-term general health. Here are some tips for your child's dental health:

- The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that a child's first dental visit takes place when the first tooth appears or by his or her first birthday.
- Clean your baby's gums with plain water and a small, soft-bristled toothbrush designed for infants.
- Start using a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste on your child's brush at age 2 to 3. Children should spit out and not swallow excess toothpaste.
- Baby teeth are important. Not only do they help children learn to speak and chew naturally, they hold the place for permanent teeth until they are ready to erupt.
- Children should not fall asleep with a bottle. Juice and other high sugar beverages should be given in a cup, never from a bottle.
- Let children brush under your supervision and assistance until they can brush by themselves—generally around age 7.
- Encourage children to chew sugarless gum and stay away from sticky candy.
- If your child plays sports, make sure he or she always wears a mouth guard.

