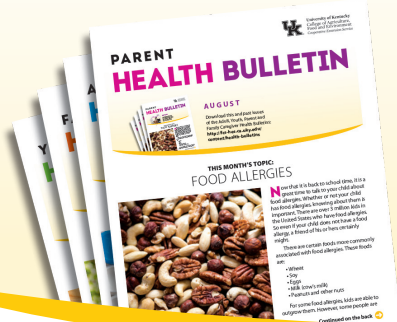




University of Kentucky  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
Cooperative Extension Service

# PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



OCTOBER 2022

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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

# CARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S TEETH



**C**avities or tooth decay are one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood in the United States. The good news is that cavities are preventable. Here are some tips and guidelines to follow that will help you with caring for your child's teeth.

## Brushing kids' teeth

### Baby teeth:

- Wipe gums twice a day with a soft, clean cloth in the morning after the first feeding and right before bed to wipe away bacteria and sugars that can cause cavities.
- When teeth come in, start brushing twice a day with a soft, small bristled toothbrush and plain water.

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# *The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that you take your child to see a dentist two times a year.*

## ➔ Continued from page 1

- Visit the dentist by your baby's first birthday to spot signs of problems early.

### **Kids' teeth:**

- Flossing should start when your child has two teeth that touch. This is often around ages 2 to 3.
- Brush their teeth twice a day for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- If your child is younger than 6, watch them brush. Make sure they use a pea-size amount of toothpaste and always spit it out rather than swallow.

### **Going to the dentist**

The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that you take your child to see a dentist two times a year. The ADA recommends that children see a dentist by their first birthday. During this visit, the dentist will make sure your child has healthy teeth, gums, and mouth. The dentist will be able to spot potential problems, prevent tooth decay, and fix any cavities.

### **Preventing cavities**

- **Start good oral habits early.** Teach kids to brush at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and to floss regularly.
- **Get enough fluoride.** Fluoride makes the enamel of our teeth stronger. The enamel is the outer part of the tooth that makes contact with food and drink.
- **Avoid or limit sweet foods and drinks.** Sugary foods, juices, candy (especially sticky gummy candy, gummy vitamins, or fruit leather or "roll-ups") can erode enamel and cause cavities.

### **Keep kids motivated**

It can be challenging to keep kids motivated to practice oral hygiene, but here are some simple tips that can help:



- **Let them watch you.** A great way to encourage children to take care of their own teeth is to watch you do it. Model brushing and flossing your teeth.
- **Play a song while brushing.** Make brushing more fun and less of a chore by playing one of their favorite songs. You can find a song that ends at around 2 minutes or just set a timer.
- **Reward them for brushing consistently.** Track their consistency on a chart with stickers on a calendar, and reward them with a gift, outing, or prize each month for brushing twice a day without missing a day.
- **Let them pick the toothpaste flavor.** Let your children decide what toothpaste flavor they want to use or try out new flavors.

Practicing regular brushing, flossing, and working with your dentist, will lead to your child having good dental health.

#### **REFERENCES:**

- <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/healthy.html#catteeth>

**ADULT**  
**HEALTH BULLETIN**

**Written by:**  
Dr. Natalie Jones, MPH, DrPH  
**Edited by:** Alyssa Simms  
**Designed by:** Rusty Manseau  
**Stock images:**  
123RF.com

