

Caring for your child's teeth

Tips for babies

- **Clean your baby's teeth and gums twice a day, after breakfast and before bed**
- Start cleaning your baby's teeth from the time they first appear (around six–12 months of age)
- Use a soft, damp cloth to begin with then move to a small, soft children's toothbrush, to clean all surfaces of the teeth
- Don't use toothpaste before your baby is 18 months of age unless directed by your dental practitioner
- Take your baby to see the dentist when their first tooth appears, or by their first birthday.

Guard against early decay

- Early decay is caused by frequent exposure to sugary drinks and foods including fruit juices, flavoured yoghurts and dried fruits
- Don't let your baby fall asleep with a bottle of milk, formula or juice in their mouth
- Replace bottles with a cup from 12 months of age
- Tap water should be the only drink in bottles and sippy cups except at meal/feed times.

Teething tips

- Baby teeth usually start to appear between six and 12 months of age
- Pressure on the teeth and gums from chewing may help relieve discomfort
- Relieve tender gums with chilled (but not frozen) teething rings, washcloths or dummies, or gently rub your baby's gums with a clean finger.

Tips for toddlers and preschoolers

- **Help your child brush their teeth until they are eight years old**
- **Make tap water your child's usual drink. In almost all of NSW it contains fluoride, which protects against tooth decay**
- Brush your child's teeth twice a day, after breakfast and before bed
- From 18 months, use a pea-sized amount of age appropriate, low-fluoride toothpaste on a soft children's toothbrush
- Avoid giving children frequent snacks, especially sugary foods and drinks, between meals
- Limit snacks to two healthy choices per day of foods such as fresh fruit, vegetable sticks and low-fat cheese
- Take your child with you to the dentist for a check-up at least once a year
- Baby teeth are important – care for them as you'd care for your child's permanent teeth.

How to brush your child's teeth

- **Brush for two minutes twice a day, after breakfast and before bed**
- Use a pea-sized amount of low-fluoride children's toothpaste on a toothbrush with soft bristles
- Brush every tooth all the way to the gums
- Brush every surface of every tooth
- Use a gentle, circular motion to brush the outside surfaces (the ones that show when you smile) and the inside surfaces (the ones facing towards the back of the mouth)
- Gently scrub the chewing surfaces of the top and bottom teeth
- Take care that your child spits out the toothpaste and does not swallow it
- Don't rinse the mouth after brushing
- Don't let your child eat or lick toothpaste from the tube.

Tips for children who don't like brushing their teeth

- Let your child watch you brushing your own teeth as often as possible – children love to copy grownups!
- Try giving your child their own toothbrush to hold while you are cleaning their teeth
- Choose a song to play while you are brushing their teeth
- Let them watch a brushing app while you brush – there are lots to choose from!
- Always buy toothpaste with the correct age range for your child, unless otherwise directed by your dental practitioner. Talk to your dentist about using adult-strength toothpaste if you're on tank water or don't have fluoridated tap water.

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