

# BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

## Start good oral health habits early

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### Why it is important

A healthy mouth is important at all stages of life.

Losing primary teeth (milk teeth) is normal. However, it is important to look after them properly to avoid losing them too early because of tooth decay. Primary teeth perform many important roles in the mouth. They are needed for eating, speaking and smiling, and a healthy set can give children confidence when speaking to others.

Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Maintaining good oral health has a positive impact on your general health, well-being and quality of life.



#### FACT

Globally, it is estimated that 530 million children suffer from tooth decay (dental caries) in their primary teeth, which can lead to pain, infection, tooth loss and missed school days.

### How to clean a baby's mouth

It is important to begin caring for a child's mouth as soon as they are born.

A newborn may not have any teeth, however, the gums will protect the bone and roots of their teeth when they do. Wipe the gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth, especially after feedings and before bedtime.

### Bottle-feeding tips and pacifiers

- Place only breast milk, formula, milk or water in bottles. Refrain from adding sugar to the milk or filling the bottles with sugary drinks such as sugar water, fruit juice and soft drinks.
- Babies should finish their bedtime and naptime bottles before going to bed. Try and avoid letting babies sleep with a feeding bottle in their mouths.
- Sucking on a pacifier or a thumb for too long affects the development of your child's teeth and mouth. Discourage thumb-sucking and extended use of the pacifier, and never dip the pacifier in sugar or honey.
- Wean your child off their pacifier by the time they turn 2½ years old.

# First tooth, first birthday milestones

Clean the mouth twice a day when the first baby tooth starts to come in. It is especially important to clean your baby's teeth before bedtime. Smear a small amount of fluoride toothpaste (about the size of a grain of rice) on their toothbrushes.

Regular dental check-ups are important to keep your child's teeth and gums healthy. Take your baby to the dentist after the first tooth comes in and no later than his or her first birthday.

Encourage drinking from a cup by their first birthday. An open cup will help your baby learn to sip and is better for your baby's teeth.



## FACT

Children are not getting dental check-ups early enough. Tooth decay can start as soon as the first tooth appears in your child's mouth.

## Growing up

Children need to establish good oral health habits as early as possible.

**Learning to brush:** as they grow older, teach children how to brush their teeth properly and supervise them as they learn to do it more independently. Children between the ages of 3 and 6 should use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste, younger children need just a smear. Brushing teeth twice daily is an essential skill for a child's long-term oral and overall health.

**Making healthy choices:** nutrition and oral health are closely related. Sugar, in particular, has a direct impact on oral health. Limit the amount of sugary snacks your child eats. Having sugar throughout the day increases the risk of developing tooth decay.

Share the *Learn good oral health habits from Toothie* fact sheet with your children and empower them to practice healthy behaviours.



**Good oral health can help you live a longer, healthier life**

For more information, visit [www.worldoralhealthday.org](http://www.worldoralhealthday.org)  
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