



ORAL HYGIENE FOR CHILDREN

If you're like most parents of preschoolers, you probably find ways to prepare your child for learning in kindergarten and beyond. Just as you teach your child the fundamentals of education when he or she is a toddler, you should also provide early lessons in good oral hygiene during this critical stage of cognitive development.

Good Oral Health Habits Begin with Us... and You

Before your child reaches the age of five, you'll be the one caring for his or her teeth. We can give you detailed instructions and tips... not only for keeping teeth and gums clean and healthy but also for motivating your child to learn how to maintain oral health. Here are some basic suggestions:

- Let the child pick his or her own toothbrush as long as it has soft bristles.
- Let the child watch parents or siblings brush. Set a good example. In this manner, children can both copy and become independent.
- A pea-sized amount of toothpaste is all that's needed, however if the child has a problem with toothpaste they can simply use water until they become tolerant of toothpaste.

Then, Your Child Takes Charge

Gradually, your child will learn by watching, feeling what's happening and listening to your descriptions of cleaning techniques. The following guidelines will help you teach good oral care habits:

- Children need help taking care of their back teeth (molars) up to age five, but otherwise you can work toward having your child brushing on his or her own by that age.
- Schedule a visit so we can talk to you and your child together about oral hygiene and encourage your child to form healthy habits.
- If there are siblings, turn brushing into a game to see who can get their teeth "the shiniest."
- By the time your child reaches age seven, he or she should be able to brush unsupervised.
- Throughout the learning process, use positive reinforcement—give lots of praise and little rewards for a job well done.

Start a good oral hygiene routine early so it can become engrained in your child's lifestyle and provide benefits that will last a lifetime.

If you have any questions about oral hygiene for toddlers or other oral health subjects, we'll be happy to answer them.