



ORAL HEALTH

Parent Information
Infants • Toddlers • Preschoolers

South Carolina Department of
Health and Environmental Control
Division of Oral Health

Oral Health Parent Information Booklet

Infants....Toddlers....Preschoolers

Background Information:

This Parent Information Booklet contains information for parents that is developmentally appropriate and based on recommendations from “Bright Futures in Practice: Oral Health,” by P. Cassamassimo. The sheets are easy to understand and can help parents take an active role in establishing and maintaining good oral health for their child. General topics include taking care of teeth, selecting the right toothbrush and toothpaste, good nutrition, safety, and going to the dentist.

The guide is designed for use in childcare centers serving infants-preschool and would also be a good resource for homeschool associations, parent and community outreach programs and dentist’s and doctor’s offices.

How to Use the Booklet:

Review the parent information sheets for age appropriateness and make copies as needed. Within the childcare setting, this guide is designed for use along with the **Teacher Activity Booklet for the Early Childhood Classroom**. In fact, many of the parent sheets are directly referenced within the activity booklet and relate to the classroom activities. There is great value in informing parents and empowering them to make positive choices for their children. Send the information sheets home throughout the year. Always encourage parents to direct their questions and concerns to their dentist or physician and to schedule regular exams.

For use in dental and medical offices, the information should also be reviewed for age appropriateness and sent home with parents according to the developmental stage of their child. The information sheets could be distributed to parents during well check visits. Parents should always be encouraged to ask questions and take an active role in their child’s oral health and overall health. The information should be a supplemental resource for parents and should never take the place of regular consultations with their doctor or dentist.

Acknowledgement:

Materials are based on recommendations from the Bright Futures in Practice: Oral Health by P. Cassamassimo

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Breastfeeding and Your Infant's Dental Health

Breastfeeding is recommended as the best way to feed your infant. It provides your infant with what he/she needs to grow and develop and remain healthy throughout life.



Protecting your infant's teeth...

- After teeth come in, do not allow your infant to sleep with the breast in his or her mouth.
- Do not use breastfeeding as a pacifier.
- Wipe your infant's gums and teeth with a clean cloth or gauze morning and night.
As more teeth come in, begin a brushing routine using water.
- Look for white or brown spots on both sides of the teeth. Contact a dentist if needed.
- Schedule that first dental visit by the time your child turns 1 year old.

Why Should I Worry About Taking Care of Baby Teeth?

- Babies and toddlers need healthy teeth for chewing. Poor dental health can affect what your baby is able to eat.
- Babies and toddlers are learning to say words. Teeth play a role in speech development.
- Baby teeth hold the place for the adult teeth.
- Baby teeth lost early because of tooth decay can cause crowding of the adult teeth.
- Decayed baby teeth can lead to pain and infection, affecting your baby's ability to learn.





Your Infant Can Get Cavities From You

Did you know?

Cavity-causing germs can be passed from person to person.

Have you ever...

- Shared a spoon or cup with your child?
- Bitten off food, then given it to your child?
- Tried to clean a pacifier that has fallen on the ground by placing it in your mouth?
- Tested your child's bottle by placing it in your mouth?
- Kissed your child directly on the mouth?

How can you prevent the spread of cavities to your infant?

Limit mouth to mouth contact by not sharing food or eating utensils, and by not placing objects in your mouth and then in your infant's mouth.



How Can I Protect My Child's Baby Teeth?

- Get in the habit of regularly wiping down gums and teeth.
- As more teeth come in, begin a brushing routine using water.
- Limit sugary foods and drinks.
- Do not put your baby down with a bottle filled with milk or formula.
- Do not let baby nurse continuously.
- Schedule the first dental visit by the time your child turns 1 year old.

Teething

When to Expect Teeth to Appear

- Teeth can begin to come in as early as 6 months and as late as 12 months of age.
- The lower two front teeth are usually the first to appear.
- The diagram below shows when teeth come in.
- Every child is different. Do not worry if some teeth are a few months early or late.
- By age 3, all 20 baby teeth should be present.

What to Expect When Your Child is Teething

Common signs of teething include:

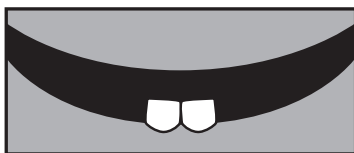
- Discomfort, restlessness, irritability, loss of appetite, and waking during the night
- Chewing on toys and fingers is very common
- The amount of saliva may increase, causing your child to drool more and cough as baby tries to clear his/her throat

Soothing Your Infant While Teething

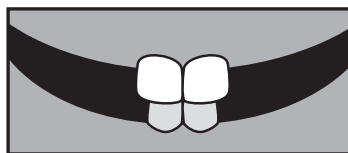
Give your child chewing objects such as a

- Cold, wet washcloth
- Hard, solid teething ring

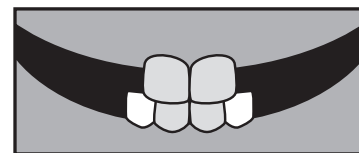
It is not recommended that you give him an over-the-counter numbing medication.



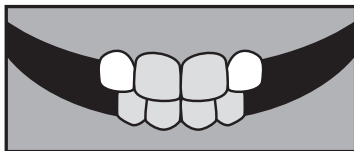
6 - 7 months



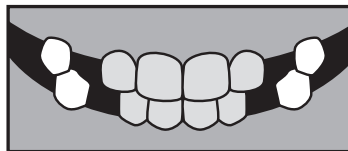
6 - 10 months



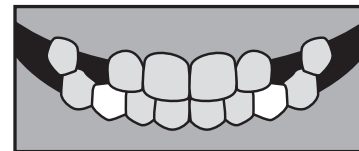
7 - 10 months



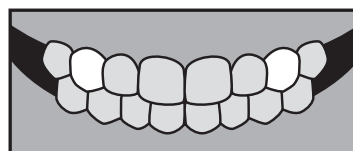
8 - 11 months



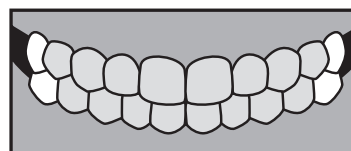
12 - 16 months



16 - 18 months



12 - 16 months



20 - 29 months

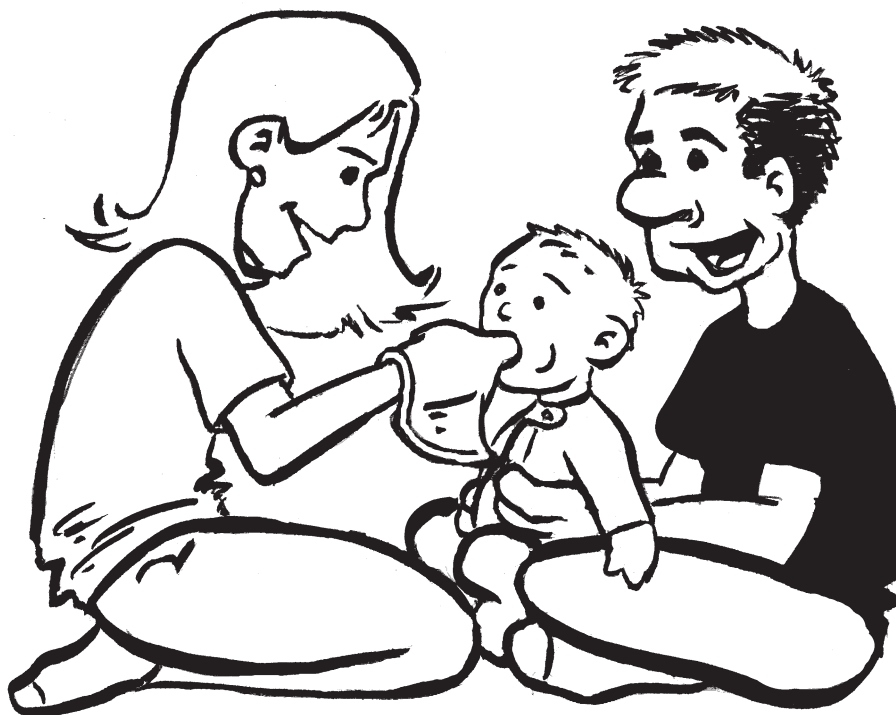
Smile Check

Parents should begin checking their child's mouth about once a month as soon as teeth begin to appear.

Tips

- Wash your hands before you begin.
- Lift your child's upper lip.
- Look at their gums and teeth.
- Try to examine the inside and outside of the tooth surface.
- As baby gets older check back teeth.
- Early decay may appear as white or brown spots.
- Contact your dentist if you notice any problems.





Caring for Your Infant's Teeth

Before Teeth Arrive

Using a clean wet cloth or gauze, gently wipe your child's

- Gum ridges
- Inside her cheeks
- Outside the lips and along the tongue

Try to do this twice a day.

After Teeth Begin to Arrive

- Continue wiping your child's teeth until he has several teeth.
- After more teeth have arrived, begin using a soft bristle, child-sized toothbrush and water.
- Ask your dentist if you need to add fluoride to your baby's diet. Fluoride prevents cavities and makes teeth stronger.

Tips for Brushing Your Infant's Teeth

- Choose a time after feeding when your infant is not fussy or overly tired.
- Cradle your infant's head with one arm and wipe or brush with the opposite hand.
- Place your infant on a changing table, bed, floor or lap.
- Sing, talk and smile with your infant while cleaning their teeth.
- Clean or brush your baby's teeth twice a day.
- Be an example, allow your infant to watch you brush your teeth.
This helps teach the importance of good oral hygiene.



A song to share....

Brush, Brush, Brush Your Teeth

Sung to: Row, Row Row Your Boat

Original Author Unknown

Brush, brush, brush your teeth.

At least two times a day.

Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, cleaning

Fighting tooth decay.

Floss, floss, floss your teeth.

Every single day.

Gently, gently, gently, gently,

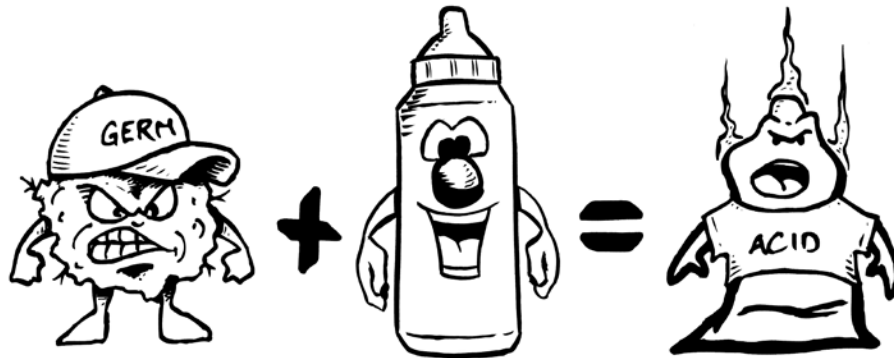
Whisking plaque away.

Rinse, rinse, rinse your teeth

Every single day.

Swishing, swishing, swishing, swishing

Fighting tooth decay.



The Bottle and Your Infant's Dental Health

Fact:

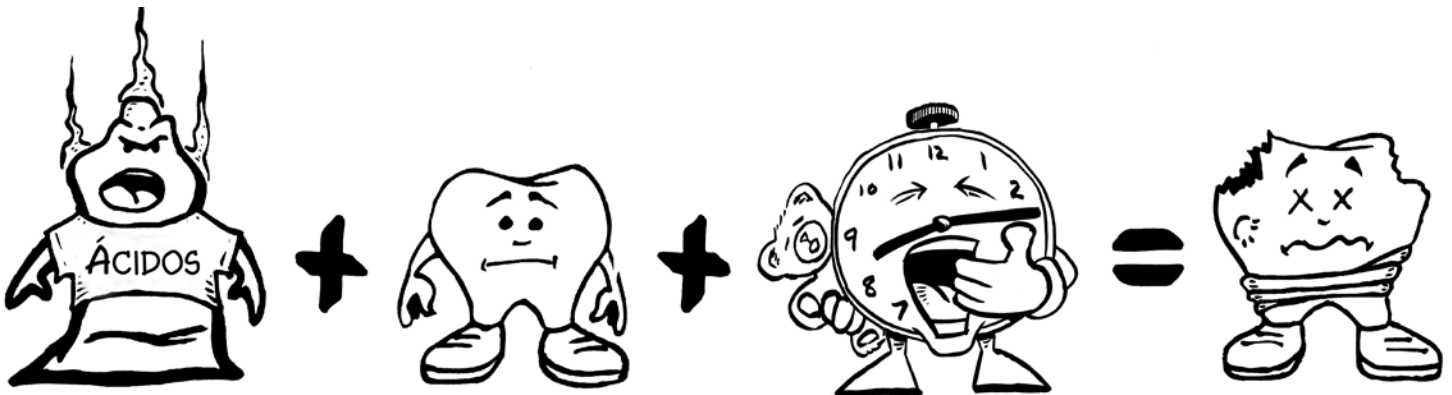
Using the bottle incorrectly can cause tooth decay.

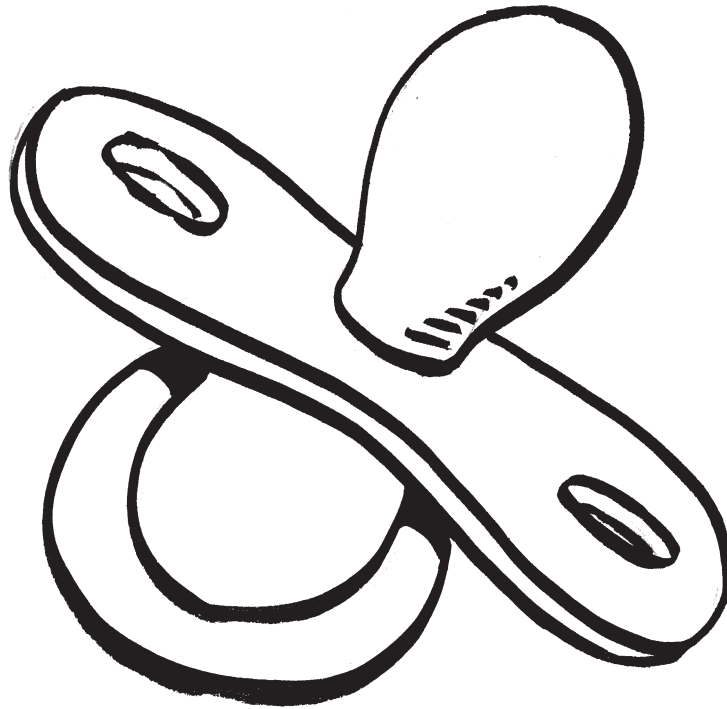
How?

Germs for tooth decay make acids from sugars in formula and milk. The acid breaks down the tooth and over time can cause tooth decay.

A Few Things To Remember

- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle filled with milk. If a bottle is necessary, only use a small amount of plain water and consult with your baby's doctor.
- Avoid using the bottle as a pacifier.
- Use only formula, breast milk or a small amount of water in the bottle.
- Hold your baby while feeding.
- Do not add cereal to a bottle. This can lead to tooth decay.
- Wean your baby from the bottle by 1 year of age.





The Pacifier and Your Infant's Dental Health

Facts

- It is normal for babies to suck on their thumbs, fingers or pacifiers for comfort.
- Some pacifiers are safer than others.

Using the Pacifier Safely and Correctly

- Make sure the pacifier is solid and all one piece.
- Pacifiers should be made of a nontoxic material.
- The shield should be ventilated and large enough to prevent swallowing.
- Pacifiers should not be tied to clothing.
- Never clean a pacifier that has dropped on the ground by placing it in your mouth.
Germs that can cause cavities (as well as dirt) can be passed to your infant.
- Never dip a pacifier in sweetened foods such as sugar, honey or syrup.
- Discourage the use of a pacifier after 18 months of age.

Caring for Your Toddler's Teeth

- Look at your child's teeth and gums at least once a month, so that you will be able to see problems in time.
- At age two, you can use a small amount of fluoride toothpaste – about the size of a rice kernel.
- Always select a soft, toddler-sized toothbrush.
- Lift your child's lip to brush at the gum line and behind the teeth.
- After brushing your child's teeth at night, do not give your child anything other than water to drink, and nothing to eat.
- Make an appointment for your child with a dentist by their first birthday.
- Check to see if you have fluoridated water at home. If you do not, ask your dentist about the need for fluoride supplements.
- Let your children see you brushing your teeth, and tell them what you are doing and why.



Toothbrushes and Toothpaste for Toddlers

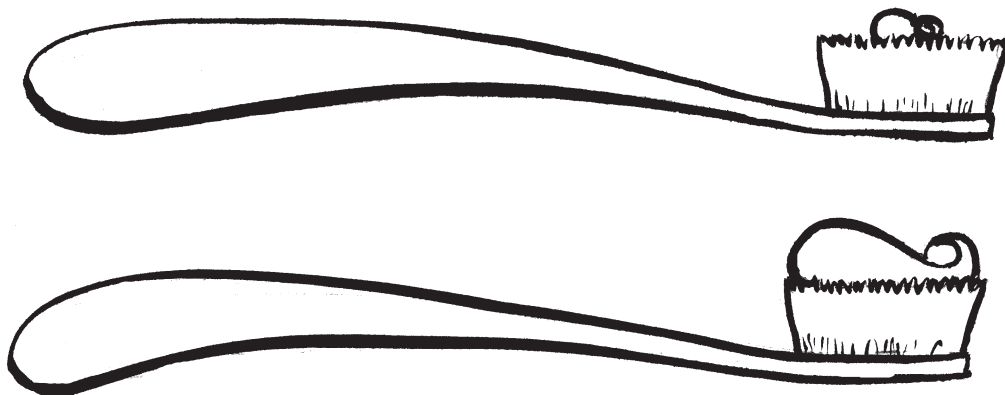
As soon as your child has teeth, he should have his very own toothbrush.

When choosing a toothbrush for your child

- Soft bristles clean the teeth better.
- Choose smaller, child-sized toothbrush heads with large handles. In addition to being more comfortable, children's toothbrushes come in a variety of colors and patterns that young children like.
- Replace toothbrushes every three to four months, or sooner if your child chews on her toothbrush or has been sick.

Hints for choosing and using toothpaste

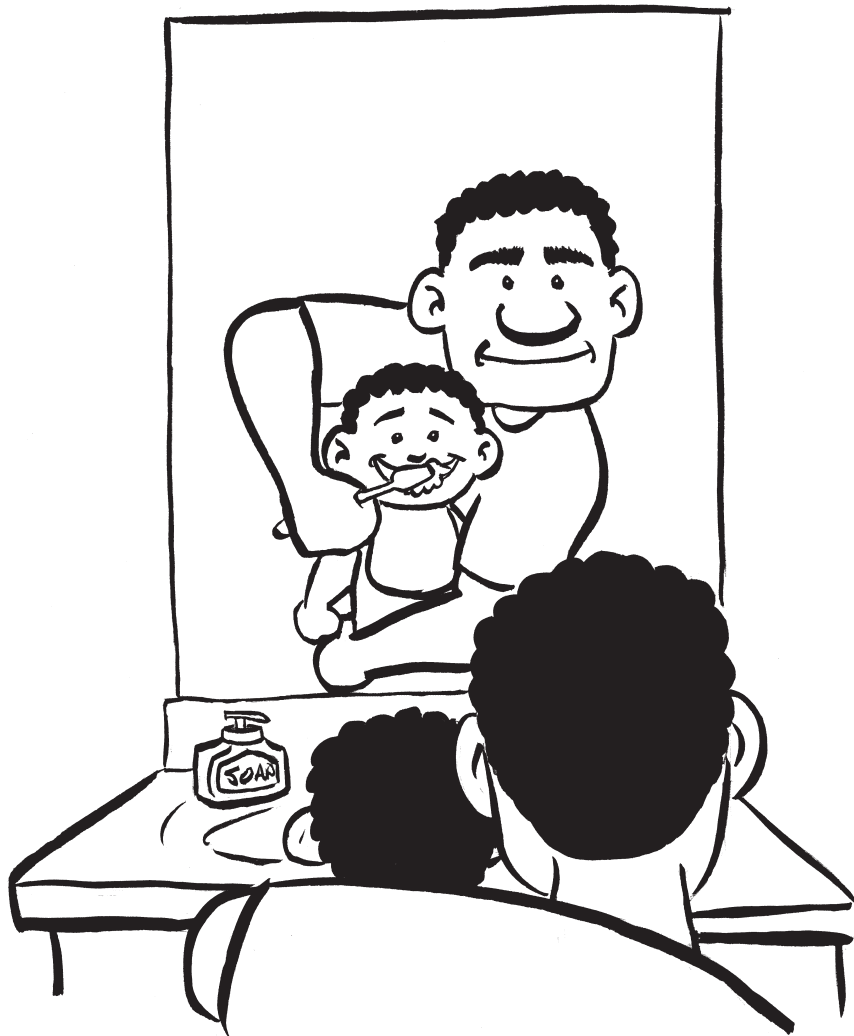
- Toothpaste with fluoride is not recommended for children under 2 years old unless recommended by a dentist.
- A pea-sized amount is recommended for children ages 2-5. The toothpaste should be applied by the parent and spread along the head of the brush.
- Children's toothpaste contains the same amount of fluoride as adult toothpaste, so the amount of toothpaste must be carefully controlled and kept out of reach after brushing.
- Using too much toothpaste can lead to "fluorosis"—a staining of the teeth.



Do You Have Trouble Brushing Your Toddler's Teeth?

Here are some tips to make brushing easier

- Brush your child's teeth with your child lying down.
- Put your child's head on your lap or on the floor, keeping it steady with your legs.
- If your child is standing, have his back to you with his head tilted slightly and resting against your body.
- Have your child stand in front of the bathroom mirror while you brush his teeth so your child can see what is being done.



How do I find a good dentist for my child?

- Many general dentists treat children. If yours does not, ask him to recommend a dentist who sees children (sometimes called a “pediatric dentist”).
- Ask your family and friends who they use.
- If you cannot find a dentist in your area who treats children, ask your family doctor or pediatrician to check your child’s mouth.

Some places you can call or go online to get information on dentists in your area:

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control’s Careline
Phone: 1-800-868-0404

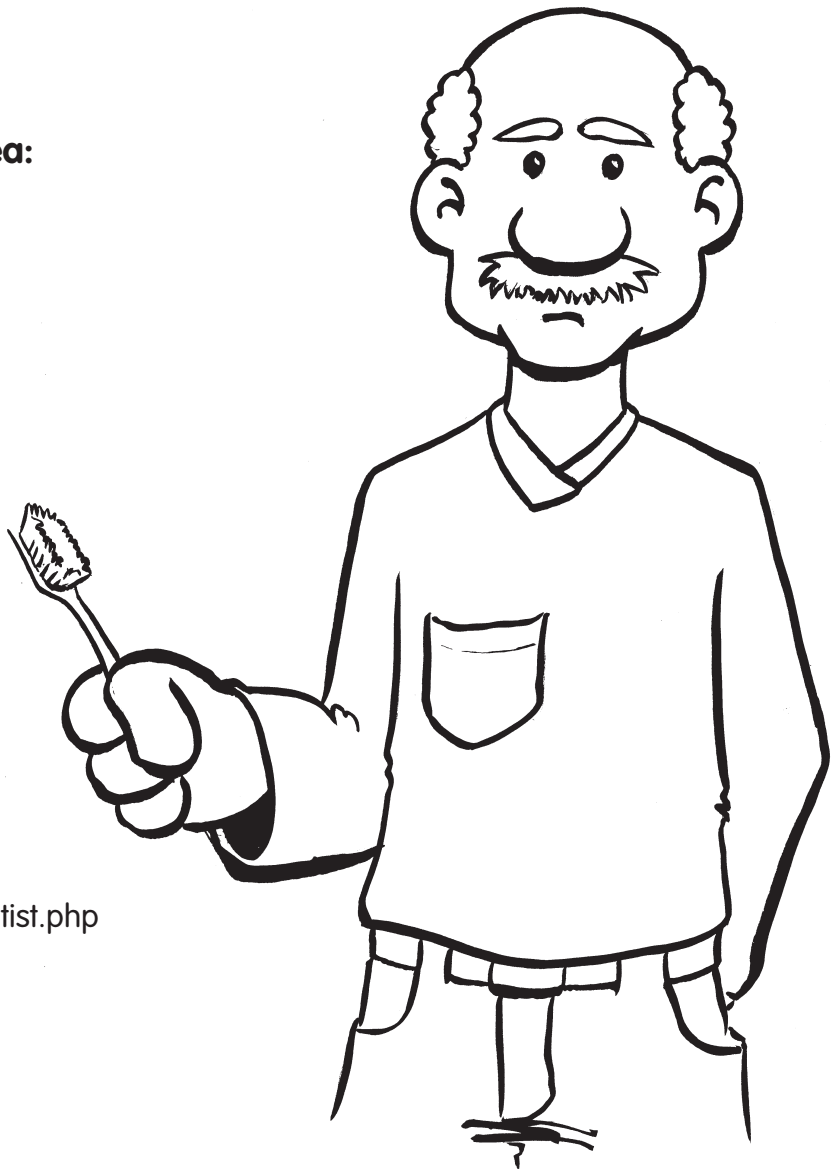
Oral Health Division Webpage
Safety Net Dental Providers
www.scdhec.gov/oralhealth
Find a dentist under Important Links

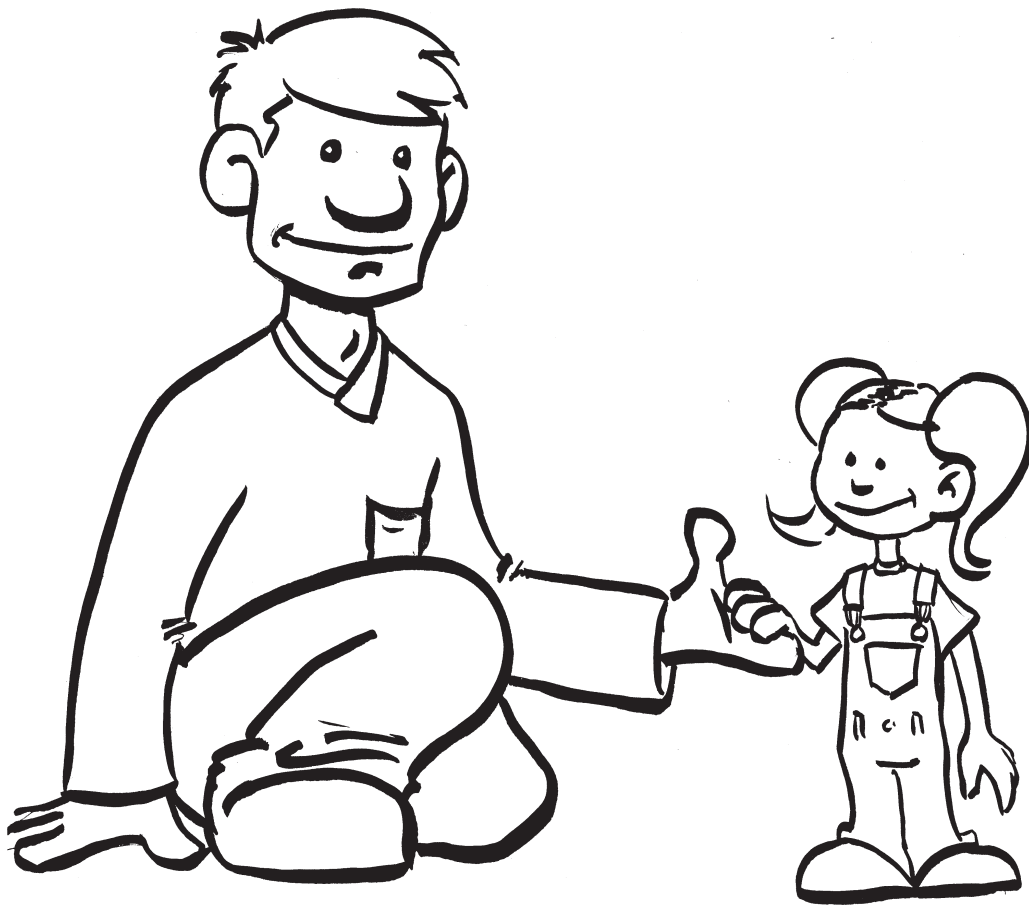
South Carolina Dental Association
Find a Dentist or a Dental Clinic
www.scda.org
Look under the Community Tab

The South Carolina Dental Directory for Individuals with Special Health Care Needs
www.handsonhealth-sc.org/A/resources/dentist.php

Find a Pediatric Dentist
American Academy of Pediatric Dentist
www.aapd.org/finddentist/

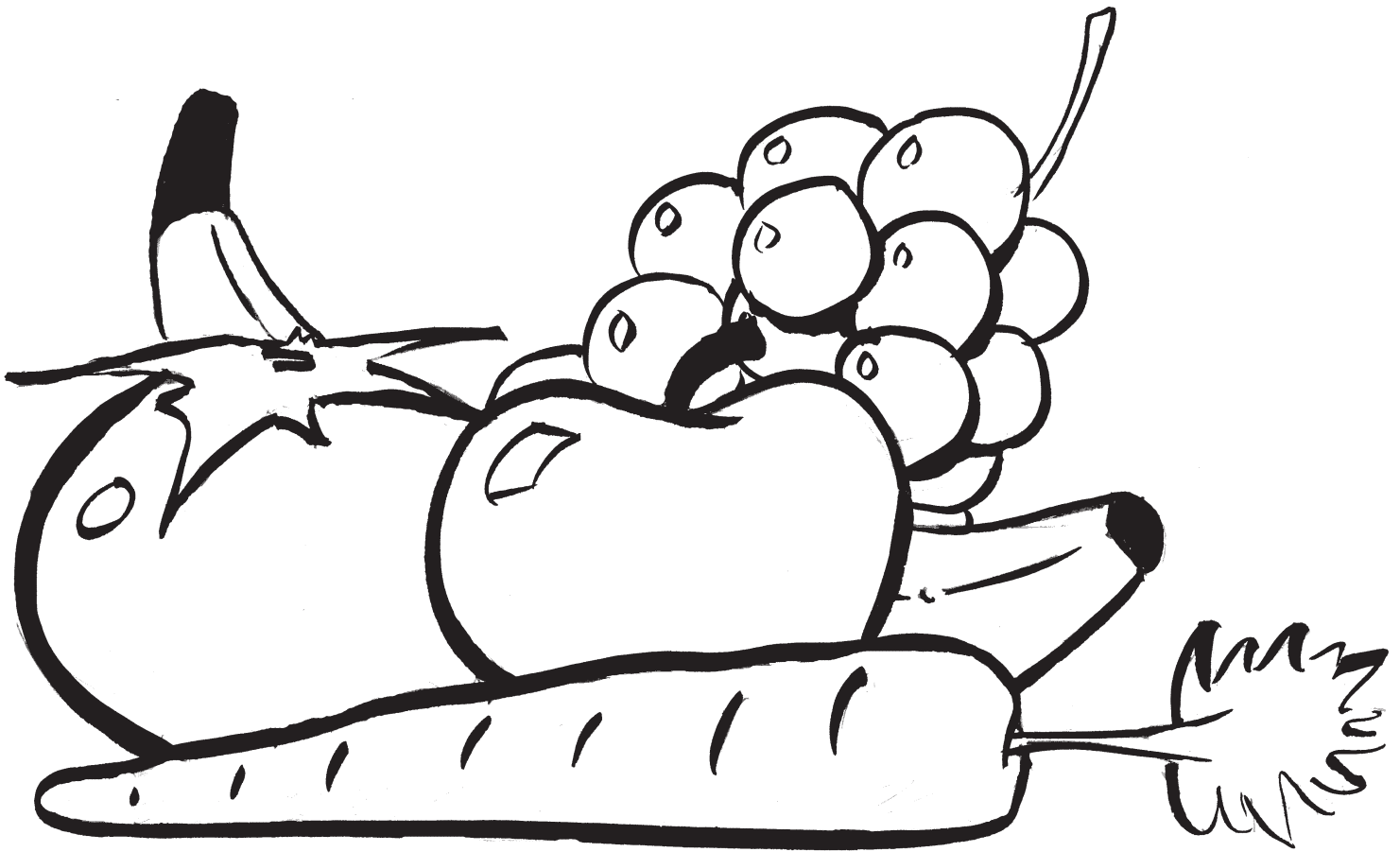
Department of Health and Human Services
www.scdhhs.gov/search4provider/Default.aspx





Your Child's First Dental Visit

- Try to make the appointment when your child is not too tired, like early in the morning or after a nap.
- Before the visit, talk to the dentist about what to expect at the first appointment.
- When talking with your child, say positive things about going to the dentist. Do not use words like "hurt," "pain," or "scared."
- Before the visit, read a book about going to the dentist to your child. A suggested book for toddlers is "Freddie Visits the Dentist", by Nicola Smee.
- Talk to your child about what to expect, and build excitement as well as understanding about the upcoming visit.
- Understand that very young children may be fussy, frightened and may not sit still. This is normal. Be patient.
- For children under 2 years old, the parent may need to sit in the dental chair and hold the child during the check up.



Healthy Eating Habits for Good Dental Health

- Give your child several small meals each day.
- Encourage healthy snacking by providing fruits, vegetables and dairy products.
Pears, melons, celery and cucumbers are good choices.
- If your child is thirsty, have your child sit in a chair and finish a drink instead of walking around with a sippy cup or bottle.
- Do not let your child constantly sip milk or other sweet liquids throughout the day.
- Limit the amount of juice you give your child. Try diluting it with water.
- Do not give your toddler sodas and candy. These can lead to tooth decay and make your child overweight.
- Try not to use food as a reward.

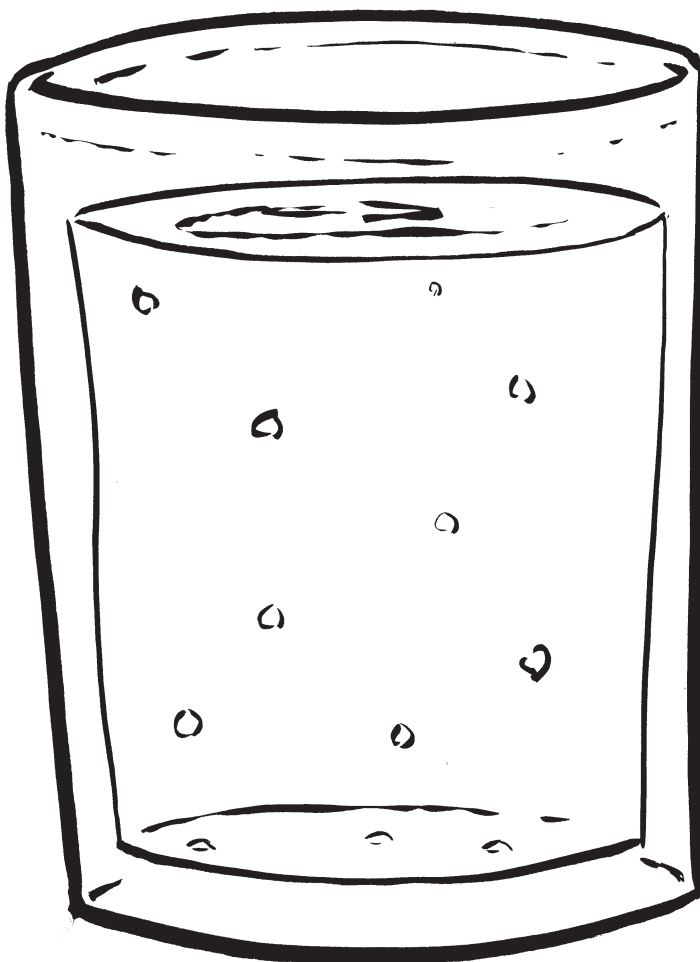
Juice

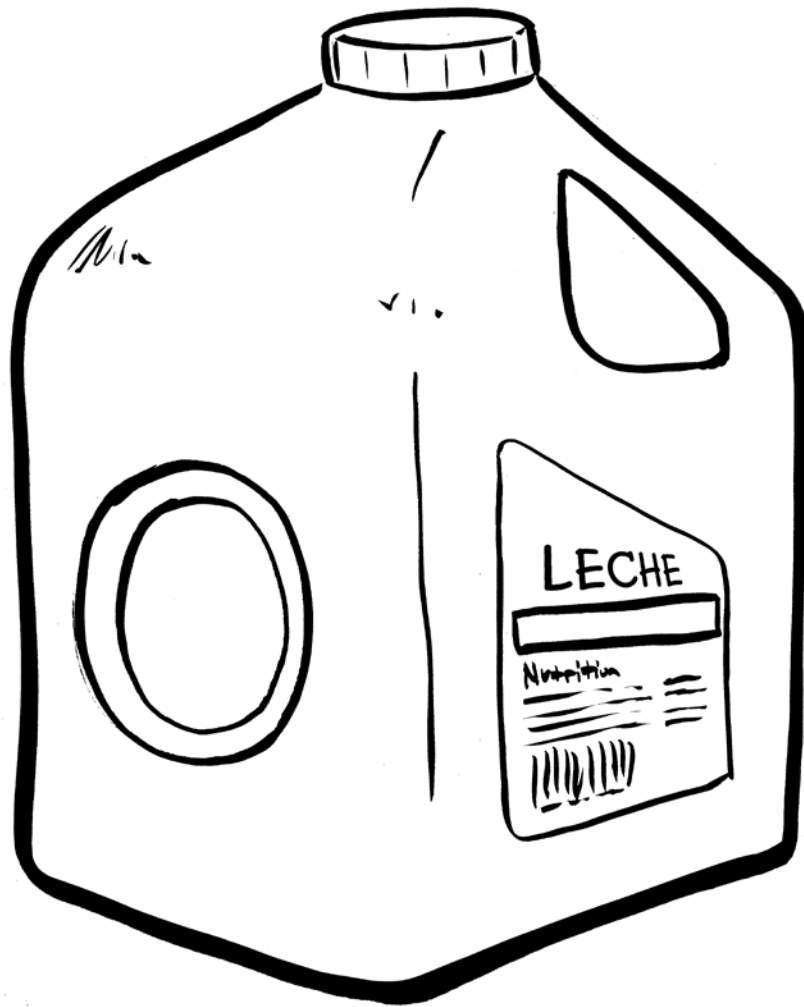
Facts

- 100 percent fruit juice can be good for your child.
- Fruit juice has natural sugars that can lead to decay if your child drinks too much of it.

How to use juice in a healthy way

- Consult with your child's doctor.
- Wait until your child is at least 6 months old before giving him juice.
- Serve juice in a cup, never a bottle.
- Give only 4 to 6 ounces of juice each day.
- Dilute the juice by adding water.
- Encourage your child to eat fruit rather than drink fruit juice.





Facts About Milk

- The calcium in milk helps keep teeth and bones strong.
- Toddlers need milk, but they should never be put to bed with a cup or a bottle filled with milk
- Toddlers should not be allowed to drink milk all day long.
- Serve milk with meals.
- Toddlers should drink about 16 ounces of milk a day (approximately four half-cup servings).
- Milk does contain sugar, so teeth should be brushed after drinking. Mouths should be rinsed with water when a toothbrush is not available.

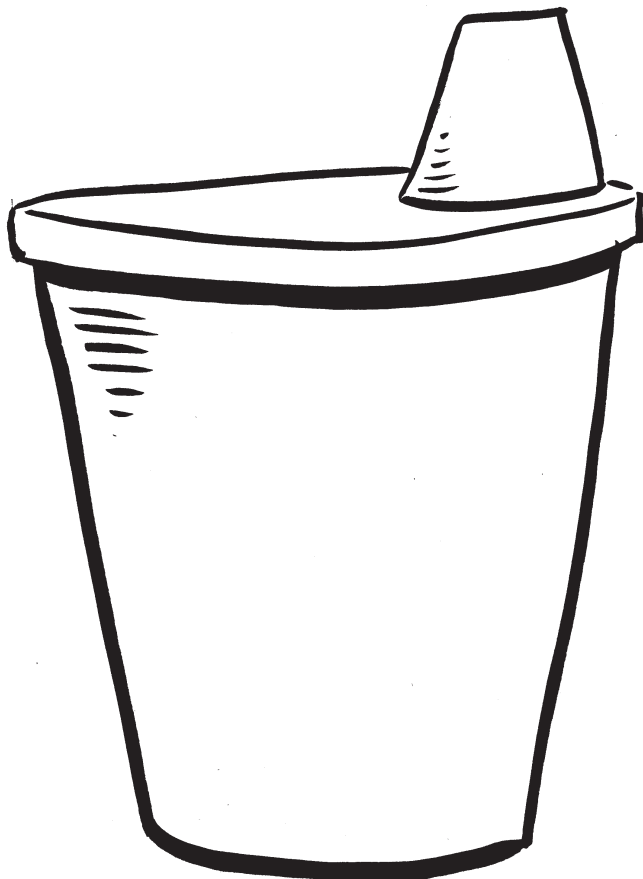
Sippy Cups

What is a sippy cup?

- Sippy cups are cups and bottles with a spout.
- Just like baby bottles, sippy cups allow liquids to collect behind the front teeth. When children are drinking sweet liquids such as milk or juice frequently, tooth decay can result.

How to use sippy cups in a healthy way . . .

- Try to only use a sippy cup during mealtimes. If one is used between meals, it should only contain water.
- Throw away sippy cups after 6 months of use.
- A sippy cup should not be carried around by your child—injury to the mouth could occur if the child fell.
- When possible, children over 18 months of age should be encouraged to use a small plastic cup without a lid.





Is Your Home Safe?

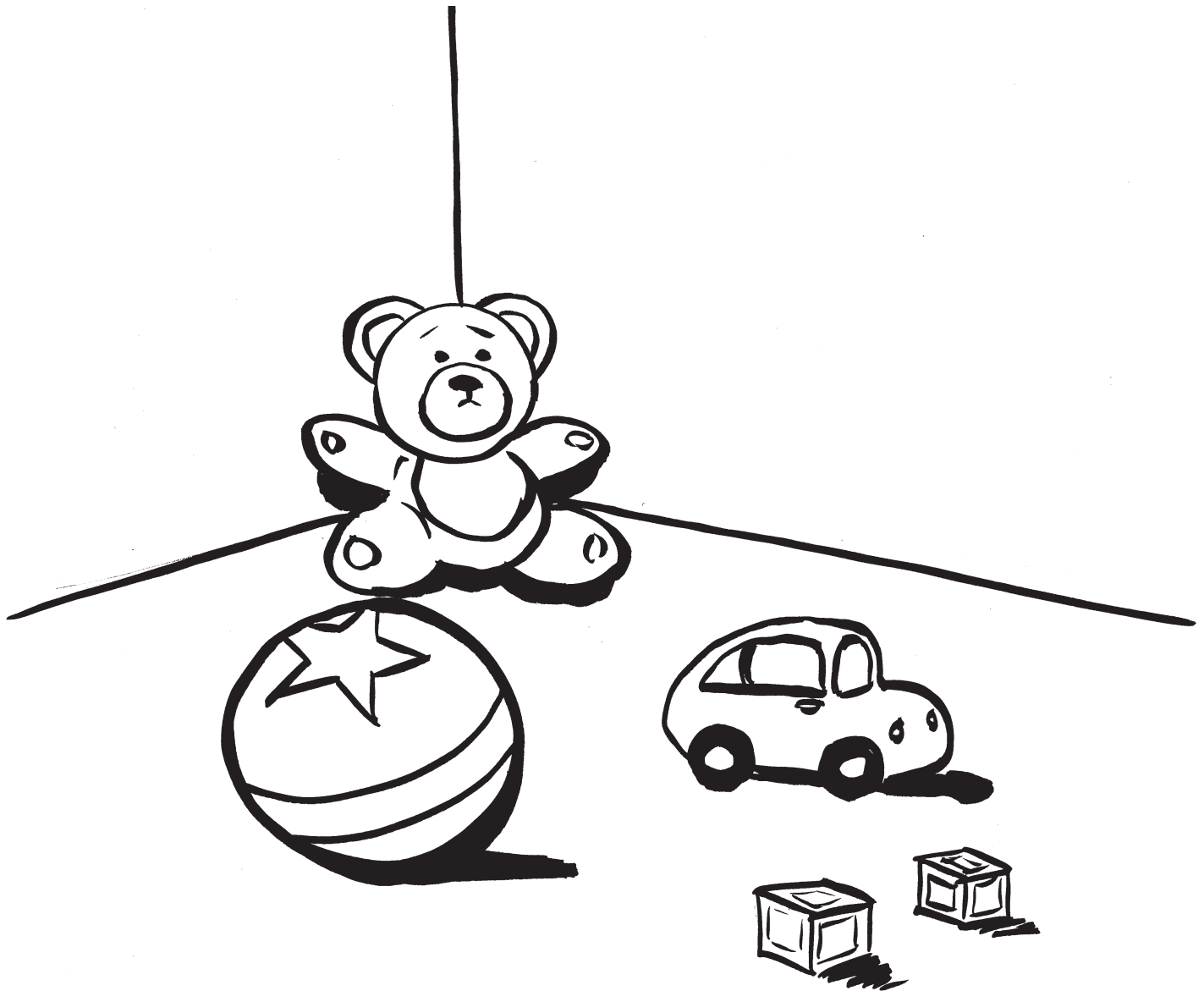
Preventing Dental Injuries in the Home

- **Do you have safety locks on your cabinets?**
Children may eat medicines or poisons.
- **Are all cords kept out of reach, including appliances and blind and drapery cords?**
Small children may chew on cords leading to electric shock or damaged teeth.
They can also strangle themselves with cords.
- **Do you have safety gates placed at the top and bottom of stairs?**
Children can fall down stairs and hurt their mouths and teeth.
- **Are play areas safe? Is the equipment well-maintained and appropriate for the age of your child?**
Children can fall off playground equipment and hurt their mouths and teeth.
- **Is your child playing with toys that are appropriate for their age and stage of development?**
Toys with small parts can choke your child, break his teeth, or get stuck in noses and ears.
- **Do you tell your child not to put things in his mouth?**
Things in your child's mouth can cause choking or break his teeth.
- **Do you watch your child when she is eating or playing?**
Watch your child to make sure she doesn't do anything that can hurt her.
- **Is your child strapped into a high chair or booster seat when eating?**
Children can fall out of high chairs and booster seats and hurt their mouths and teeth.
- **Do you let your child walk around the house with sippy cups or popsicles?**
Children can fall and hurt themselves with the cup spouts or popsicle sticks.

Safety: Toys and Dental Health

When choosing toys for your child, make sure that

- The toy is too large to fit in a child's mouth.
- Toys do not have small parts that can come off and be put in the mouth.
- Toys do not have sharp edges that can hurt a child's mouth.
- Balls are made of soft materials, so your child is not hurt if hit in the face or mouth.
- The use of baseball bats or golf clubs is supervised carefully.





Home for the Holidays

The holidays can present some hazards to your child's dental health and their overall safety. Below are a few things to keep your holidays bright and healthy for your toddler.

- **Use age appropriate decorations.**

Keep glass bulbs, lights, tinsel and ornaments that are delicate or have removable parts out of reach. Toddlers who are still "mouthing" items may put ornaments and other decorations in their mouths.

- **Avoid decorating with popcorn.**

It is a choking hazard for children under age 5.

- **Place your tree on top of a table (no table cloth) or put a safety fence around it.**

- **Have visitors put luggage and purses where they can't be reached.**

Medicines and other items can be harmful if chewed or swallowed by a toddler.

- **Avoid putting out hard candies and nuts.**

These foods are not good for your toddler's teeth and can be a choking hazard for children under age 5.

- **Follow the age recommendations when selecting toys.**

Many of the toys for children over 3 come with lots of little pieces that are a danger to infants and toddlers if placed in their mouths.

How to Make Toothbrushing Fun!

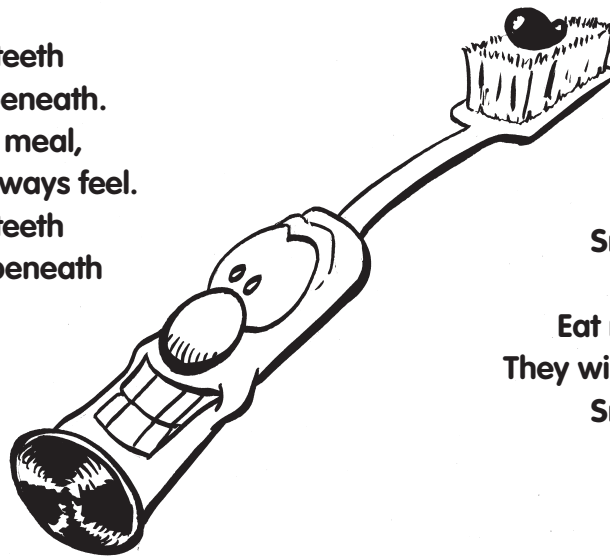
- Take your child to the store and let him pick out a few toothbrushes in his favorite color or with his favorite characters. When brushing his teeth, give him a choice of which toothbrush he wants to use. This will help motivate him to brush.
- Let your child brush her teeth at the same time you are brushing your teeth.
- Create a "toothbrushing routine." The routine can include playing music, getting things set up, and using a favorite cup for rinsing. Try and stick to the same routine every day.
- Let your child brush his own teeth first, then you should brush them again. Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste after brushing.
- Keep in mind that most "children's toothpaste" brands are fluoridated. You should only use a very small amount—about the size of a pea. Swallowing too much toothpaste with fluoride can lead to staining of the teeth (fluorosis).

Sparkle

Sung to: Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Original Author Unknown

Sparkle, sparkle little teeth
Some above and some beneath.
Brush them all at every meal,
Clean and fresh they will always feel.
Sparkle, sparkle little teeth
Some above and some beneath



Snacking, snacking, it's okay.
Try it in the proper way.
Eat raw veggies, fruit and cheese.
They will make your mouth say, "Please!"
Snacking, snacking, it's okay.
Try it in the proper way.

Floss them, floss them, in between
Cavities will not be seen!
See your dentist twice a year,
You will grin from ear to ear
Floss them, floss them, in between
Cavities will not be seen!

How To Choose the Right Toothbrush and Toothpaste for Your Preschooler

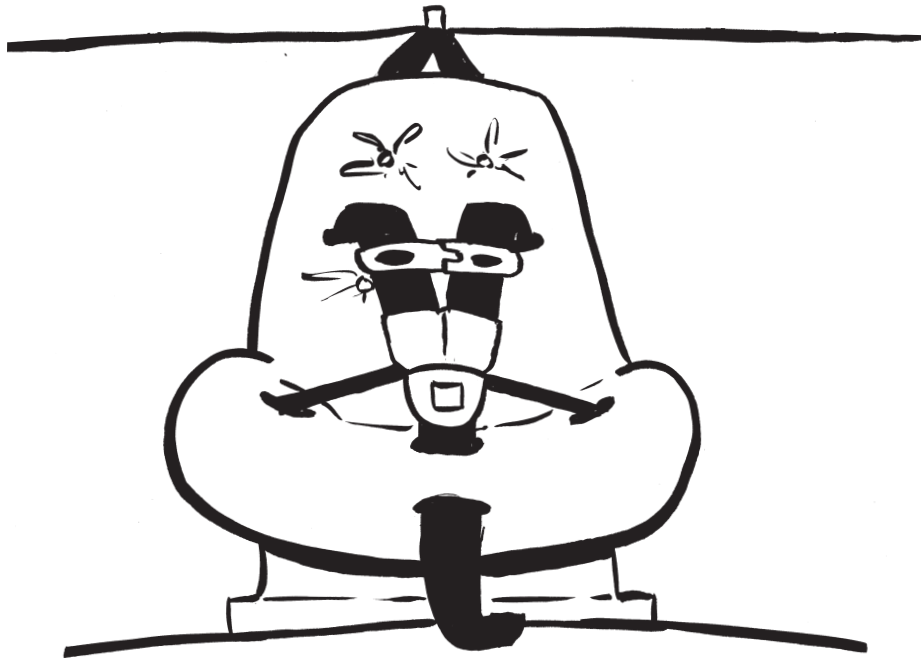
Guidelines for choosing a toothbrush for your child

- Choose smaller, child-sized toothbrush heads with large handles. These are more comfortable.
- Look for a brush with soft bristles that will not hurt gums.
- Change toothbrushes every three to four months, or sooner if your child chews on his toothbrush or has been sick.
- Remember that by the time a child is 3 to 4 years old, they should have their very own toothbrush. Children may enjoy picking toothbrushes out themselves.

Selecting and Using Toothpaste

- Control the amount of toothpaste that you use and keep it out of children's reach. Children's toothpaste contains the same amount of fluoride as adult toothpaste.
- Using too much toothpaste can lead to "fluorosis"—a staining of the teeth.
- A pea-sized amount of toothpaste is recommended for children 2-5 years old. The toothpaste should be applied by the parent and spread along the head of the brush. Parents should help children brush their teeth until the child is at least 7 years old.





Keeping Your Child's Smile Safe When Riding in a Car

Injuries to the head, face and mouth are common among preschoolers.

Learn how to prevent injuries and how to handle them if they occur.

4 Steps for Kids

Step 1: Use rear facing child seats for children from birth to 20 pounds AND one year of age. The Academy of Pediatrics recommends leaving children facing the rear until they reach the maximum rear facing weight of their convertible car seat.

Step 2: Use forward facing child seats for children over 20 pounds and one year of age to 40 pounds.

Step 3: Use belt positioning booster seats for children from 40 pounds to 80-100 pounds.

Step 4: Use seat belts for children when they are able to utilize the seat belt correctly when the shoulder belt crosses the collarbone and the lap belt fits low on the hips. Approximately 4' 9" tall and 80-100 pounds.

For more information on S.C. DHEC's Child Passenger Safety Program call:

(803) 545-4347 or (803) 545-4349

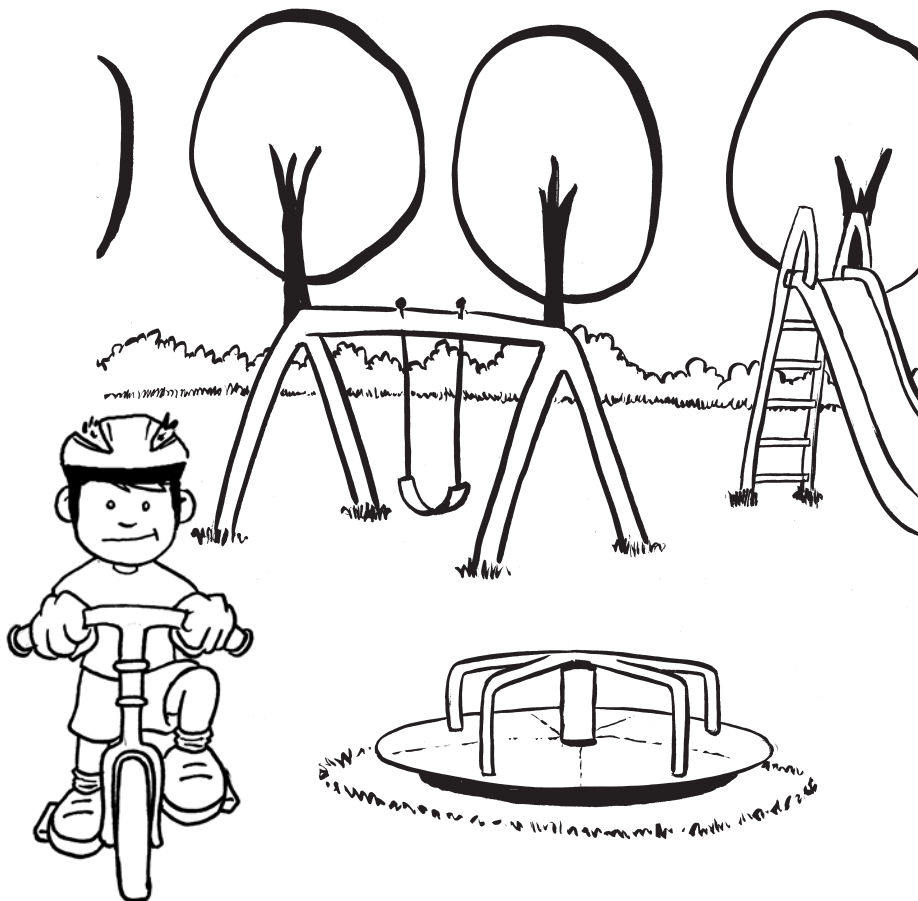
Or find information online at:

www.scdhec.net/health/chcdp/injury/child_passenger_safety.htm

Keeping Your Child's Smile Safe At Home and In School

Injuries to the head, face and mouth are common among preschoolers. Learn how to prevent injuries and how to handle them if they occur.

- Do not let your child walk around with something in his mouth, such as a cup, a Popsicle or a lollipop.
- Clean up toys, objects and spills to prevent tripping and falling.
- Teach your child to hold the handrail when walking up and down stairs.
- Provide the school with the emergency phone number of your child's dentist.
- Check out the play equipment at home and at school. It should be in good condition and surrounded by a soft material (i.e., loose sand, wood chips, mulch).
- Have your child wear a helmet when riding his bicycle or other riding toy.
- Teach your child not to bite or chew on hard objects, such as ice or pencils.





Keeping Your Child's Smile Safe When Shopping

The Facts:

Injuries to the head, face and mouth are common among preschoolers. Learn how to prevent injuries and how to handle them if they occur.

A fall from a shopping cart can cause a serious injury to the head and mouth.

A fall from a shopping cart can cause serious injury to the head and mouth.

- Place a child in a stroller rather than a shopping cart when possible.
- Strap your child in at all times in the appropriate seating area of the cart
- Do not allow your child to sit in the basket section of the cart.
- Never allow your child to stand up in a shopping cart.
- Never let a young child push or steer the shopping cart.

How to Respond to a Dental Emergency

Keep this chart with your first aid information and supplies and use as a guide for teeth and mouth injuries.

Emergency	What To Do?
Toothache	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child needs to see a dentist as soon as possible • Do not use heat or place aspirin on aching tooth or gums
Permanent Tooth Knocked Out	<p>If a tooth is knocked out, it can be saved if you act quickly and appropriately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find the tooth. • Do not handle it by the roots. • If dirty, rinse with warm water. • Do not scrub it. • Gently insert in its socket. • If unable to do this, place the tooth in a glass of milk. • As last resort, place tooth in a glass of water. • The tooth must not dry out! • Take the child and the tooth immediately to the dentist.
Baby Tooth Knocked Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not try to put a baby tooth back in the socket. • Place in cool milk or water. • Take the child and the tooth immediately to the dentist.
Broken Tooth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently clean dirt or debris from the area of the injured tooth with warm water. • Place cold compresses on the face, in the area of the injured tooth to minimize swelling. • Go to the dentist immediately. • Apply direct pressure to the bleeding area with a clean cloth.
Bitten Lip or Tongue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply direct pressure to the bleeding area with a clean cloth. • If swelling is present, apply cold compresses. • If bleeding continues, go to the hospital emergency room.



Why You Should Take Your Preschooler to the Dentist

A child should go to the dentist when they turn 1, and by the time a child is 3 to 4 years of age, they should be seen regularly (every six months) by a dentist.

The purpose of these early visits to the dentist is:

- To check your child's teeth.
- For the child, you and the dental team to get to know one another.
- To inform you and your child about how to prevent dental problems.
Problems can occur from not brushing regularly and from poor eating habits.
- To decide if your child needs additional fluoride.
This is generally recommended for children who are at a high risk for tooth decay.
- To discuss the need for dental sealants. A dental sealant is a thin plastic coating that is applied to the chewing surfaces of teeth to help prevent tooth decay.

Nutrition and Your Child's Dental Health

What, when and how your children eat affects their dental health

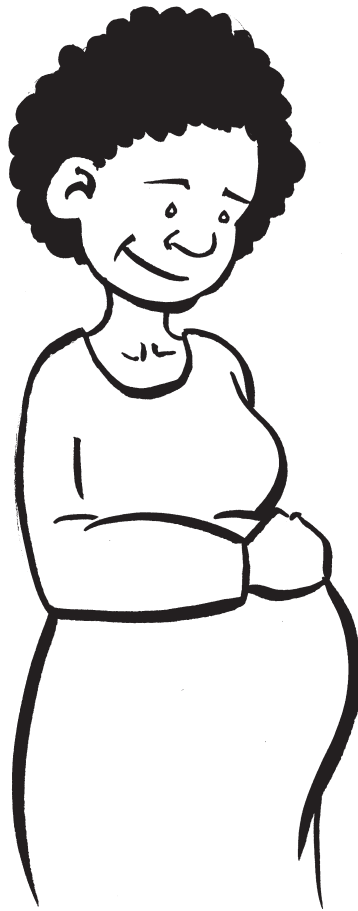
- Serve fruit, vegetables, whole grain products, and dairy products. Healthy dairy products include milk, cottage cheese, cheese, and unsweetened yogurt.
- Only serve foods containing sugar at mealtimes. Limit the amount. Remember that foods such as candy, cookies, cake and sweetened drinks increase your child's risk of tooth decay.
- Limit the eating of sticky foods such as fruit roll-ups, caramels, Tootsie Rolls, and Starbursts.
- If your child drinks bottled water, use a brand that contains fluoride.
- Limit eating between meals. Serve age-appropriate healthy foods during planned meals and snacks.
- Do not allow your child to share eating utensils or cups. Germs that cause tooth decay can be passed from parent to child.

GOOD



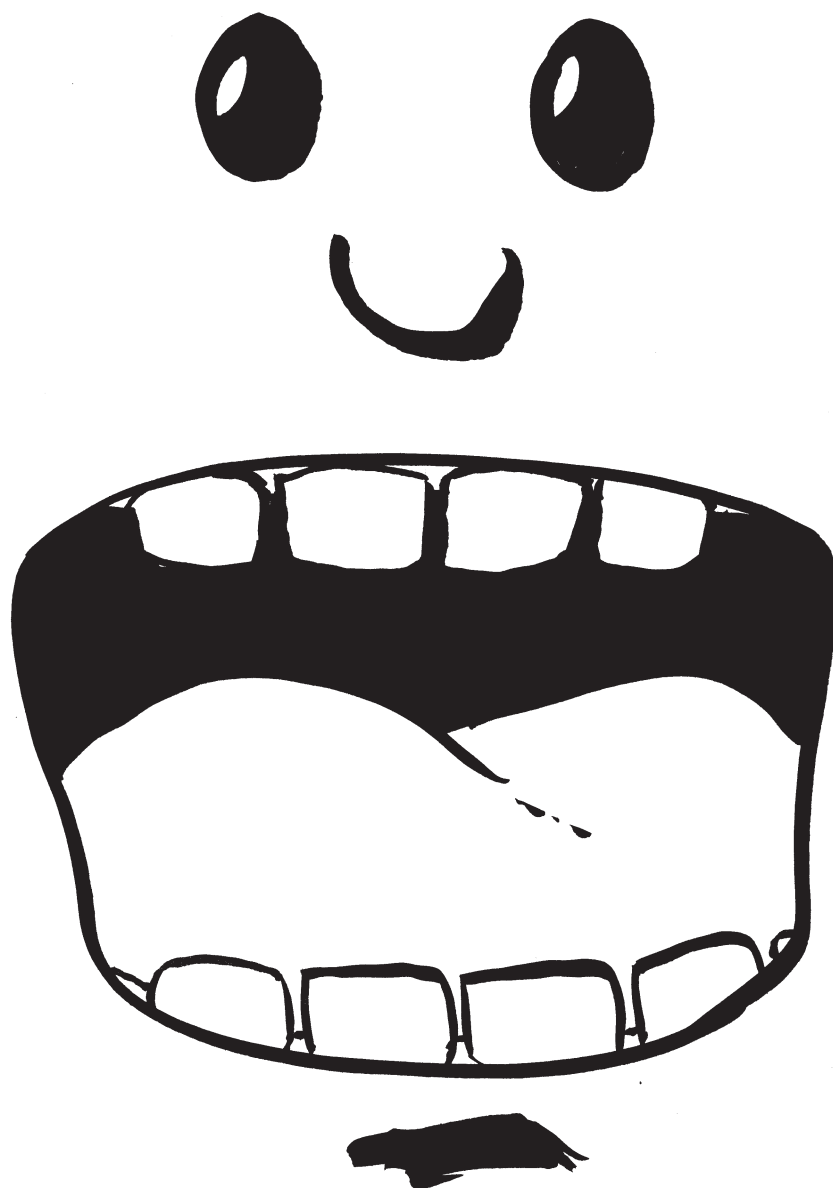
BAD





Dental Health for Mothers-To-Be

- During pregnancy there are hormonal changes that may cause a women's gums to swell and bleed.
- It has been found that severe gum disease during pregnancy is linked to babies being born too early or too small.
- The best way to prevent gum disease is to brush with fluoridated toothpaste at least twice a day, floss each day and see your dentist.
- Eating healthy is very important during pregnancy because the baby gets nutrients from the mother. Foods with calcium are very important for you and your baby's teeth and bones.
- Calcium is in milk, cheese, dried beans, and leafy green vegetables.
- Sweets or starchy foods and cavity germs can cause tooth decay. Eat healthy snacks like fruits and vegetables in between meals instead of chips, cookies and candy.





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