



TOOTHBRUSHING GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Dental decay, the most common disease afflicting children and adults today, can be prevented by a few simple steps. These steps, when incorporated into a daily routine, can help your child avoid dental decay.

Dental decay involves three major components: the tooth, bacteria, and food. When we eat, food particles are digested by the bacteria in the mouth; this produces a sticky substance called "plaque". The bacteria and plaque produce an "acid", which destroys the minerals that make up the tooth. This destruction of the tooth's minerals is tooth decay.

The most effective way to avoid tooth decay is to prevent the buildup of bacteria on the tooth. This is accomplished by a daily oral hygiene program of brushing and flossing.

Tooth brushing should be done at least twice a day. The most important time to brush is in the evening before bedtime. Most children under the age of 7 or 8 need assistance in tooth brushing because their manual dexterity skills have not developed enough to do an effective job. Parents should assist their child to assure that the best job of brushing is done.

Sit down, on the couch or bed. Get comfortable, and have the child place his or her head on your lap. Use a dry brush, with no toothpaste or water, and gently brush the child's teeth. Brush back and forth along the gum line, on both the outside and inside of the teeth. Then go back and brush the biting surfaces of the teeth. Make sure that the bristles of the brush get all the way down to the gum line on the inside of the lower back molars and the outside of the upper molars. These are the hardest areas to keep clean.

Flossing should also be done while the child's head is on your lap. All teeth that are close together need to be flossed in order to remove the bacteria and food debris. The back baby teeth need the most attention, because they will be in the mouth until about age 12.

Hold the floss tight and slide it in between the teeth. The side surfaces of the teeth must be cleaned while flossing between each tooth. Make sure that the floss gets below the gum line on both sides of the space.

After this is completed, allow the child to "finish up" the job with toothpaste (Crest™, Colgate™, Aim™, etc.). This gives the child's teeth the benefit of fluoride in the toothpaste and helps the child develop good brushing and flossing habits before bedtime. It is important that you brush your child's teeth before you "turn them loose" in the bathroom to do their part. The effectiveness of fluoride is compromised if the plaque is not removed from the teeth. Plaque removal is the reason that Moms and Dads are the first step of the process.

Proper oral hygiene, limiting sweet foods, and regular dental check-ups should help us prevent dental decay in your child's mouth.

Thank you for letting us help you keep your child's smile healthy!

Your Forward Dental Care Team