



Key Tip: Brush two times a day for two minutes!

Healthy Tooth Tips for Children

Starting with the eruption of the first tooth, your child's teeth should be brushed at least twice a day, and flossed at least once per day. The best times are after breakfast and before bed. Here are some practical pointers for overcoming oral hygiene challenges at all ages. We hope these tips will help in your home, as they do in ours!

Infant or wiggly toddler:

- Until your child is 3 years old, we recommend using a small amount of fluoride toothpaste – just enough to cover two tufts of bristles at the end of the brush (or about the size of a rice grain).
- If you have another adult to help with brushing, try the “knee to knee” method, as shown in the picture:
 - Sit facing each other with your knees touching. Lay the child across your laps so that his/her head rests in the lap of the adult who will do the brushing, while the other person gently holds the child's hands.
 - If your child won't open their mouth, you can slide the index finger of your non-dominant hand between the cheek and teeth until it rests on the gums behind the last tooth – this leaves your other hand free to brush and floss, and helps you see better!
- If you're alone, you can cradle your child in your arm, using your dominant hand to brush and the index finger on your opposite hand to gently retract the cheek.



Infant night feedings: If your child feeds during the night and you aren't able to brush, try wiping their teeth with a warm, wet bath cloth after nursing or bottle feeding.

Preschool-age children:

- For children age 3-6, use a half-pea size amount of fluoride toothpaste for brushing.
- Giving one or two choices during brushing sessions is a great way to help preschoolers feel in control of part of the process: try having different flavors of toothpaste, or a selection of brushes!
- Think outside the bathroom! Other great places to brush are a couch, or even the floor – lying down can make it easier for your child to stay still, and for you to see where you need to brush.
- If your child wants to brush their own teeth, try letting them have a turn *after* you have your turn, since sometimes kids are tired after the 2 minutes it takes to do a good job.
- A great way to hold your child's interest for these two minutes is with a song! You can sing yourself – or for the more vocally challenged among us, a recording of your favorite artist 😊

School-age children and adolescents:

- Many parents don't realize that kids still need help with brushing and flossing until about age 8! And even older kids need supervision to make sure they are cleaning their teeth effectively – a few minutes of watching your child brush at bedtime can help them have fewer cavities!
- Children in this age range should brush with a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Use your dentist as an ally! Every child is unique, and your dentist can point out areas where your child may need help brushing, or give a high-five for a job well done.

