

Give Your Child's Smile a Bright Start . . . For an Even Brighter Future

Did you know that cavities are the most chronic childhood disease? Cavities are five times more common than asthma. **Children with pain from tooth decay typically miss more school and have lower grade point averages than their peers.** But cavities are nearly 100% preventable, and it's easy to protect your child's oral health and ensure a bright future. It's never too early to start! Adopting healthy habits at any age can help prevent painful tooth decay and affect your child's learning and future success. **Dental health is part of overall health, and healthy teeth—even baby teeth—are important for life-long health.** Here are some guidelines you can follow at every stage that will help keep your child's smile healthy.

NEWBORNS & INFANTS

- ▶ Wipe your baby's gums with a clean cloth, especially after feedings and before bed.
- ▶ Put only water in your baby's sippy cup. Juice and milk are fine with meals.
- ▶ Once your child gets his or her first tooth, usually around 6 months, it's time to start brushing. All you need is a baby toothbrush and some water; fluoride toothpaste is not recommended.
- ▶ When your child has two teeth that touch, it's time to start flossing.
 - ▶ Make the first visit to the dentist within six months of getting that first tooth or by your child's first birthday.

YOUNG CHILDREN

- ▶ Until age 6, you should brush with your child for two minutes, twice a day.
- ▶ Ask about sealants for your child's permanent molars. The first set usually comes in around 6 years old, the second set around 9.
- ▶ Encourage your children to make healthy snack choices like fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ See the dentist every six months.

OLDER CHILDREN & TEENS

- ▶ When your child is around 9 or 10 years old, ask about braces. Your dentist can refer you to an orthodontist if necessary.
- ▶ Make sure your child wears a mouthguard during contact sports.
- ▶ Have your child drink tap water (which is fluoridated in Colorado) instead of bottled water.
- ▶ Steer clear of sports drinks and sodas.