

# Academy Health and Wellness

February 2021

Oral health affects our ability to eat, speak, smile, and show emotions. Oral health also affects a person's self-esteem, school performance, and attendance at work or school. Oral diseases, which range from cavities and gum disease to oral cancer, cause pain and disability for millions of Americans and cost taxpayers billions of dollars each year.

Cavities, also known as caries or tooth decay, are one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood in the United States. Untreated cavities can cause pain and infections that can lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. Children who have poor oral health often miss more school and receive lower grades than children who don't.

The good news is that cavities are preventable. Fluoride varnish can prevent about one-third (33%) of cavities in the primary (baby) teeth. Children living in communities with fluoridated tap water have fewer cavities than children whose water is not fluoridated. Similarly, children who brush daily with fluoride toothpaste will have fewer cavities. Dental hygiene is one of the most important things we can teach our children. Unfortunately, for a lot of parents, getting kids to brush and floss their teeth is no easy task.

A child's primary teeth, sometimes called "baby teeth," are as important as the permanent adult teeth. The American Dental Association, recommends that a dentist examine a child within six months after the first tooth comes in and no later than the first birthday.

Children are at higher risk of getting cavities if their older siblings have cavities, they eat a lot of sugary foods and drinks, they have special health care needs and if they wear braces, orthodontics or oral appliances. Children 2 years and older should brush their teeth 2 times per day with fluoride toothpaste, drink plenty of water with fluoride and caregivers should discuss with your dentist about applying dental sealants.

February is National Children's Dental Health month. This year's National Children's Dental Health Month campaign is "Water, Nature's Drink"! Water can rejuvenate the body and stave off those sugary drinks and foods in our diet. Many of us take for granted the benefits of taking good care of our teeth however it is important that we inform children and reinforce the message regularly. This month long national health observance, is designed to bring everyone together to promote the benefits of good oral health for one and all.

Let's celebrate National Children's Dental Health Month. Together we can help children develop good dental hygiene habits. Helping children maintain a healthy smile takes some extra work and vigilance. When they are still very young and may not be able to brush on their own, they may need our help and when they are older, reminding them to brush. Follow the 2x2 rule. Brush and floss for 2 minutes, 2 times a day.

Here is a hyperlink with some activities you can do with your children:

[2020NCDHM\\_Maze\\_English-Spanish.indd \(ada.org\)](#)



**National Children's Dental Health Month (ada.org)**