

Dental health

for young children

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D E N T A L



Dental health for young children

Every time your baby eats or drinks, their newly emerged teeth are attacked by acids in food and plaque.

It is important that your child's first, or primary, teeth remain healthy for chewing, for speaking, to reserve the correct space in the gums for permanent teeth to erupt, and to avoid toothache.

Diet and decay risk

The enamel surface of babies' teeth is thin and not as tough as that of adults' teeth. Thus greater care should be taken to ensure the risk of decay is minimised.

Here are some suggestions:

- ensure your child's diet includes lots of home-cooked vegetables (low in added sugar) and fresh fruit;
- check nutritional information on food packaging to limit the amount of sugar consumed by children;
- limit the quantities of confectionary, soft drinks, cordials and fruit drinks for children of all ages;
- choose non-acidic drinks between meals, such as milk or water;
- check your child's teeth regularly for dark spots;
- limit, with the aim to eliminate, frequent night-time bottle or breastfeeding past 12 months of age (offer water if a pacifier is needed).

Continuous access to a bottle containing milk, juice or other sweetened drinks leads to an increased risk of decay. This risk rises further if the bottle is left with the child at bedtime as the saliva flow that generally washes away food acids is reduced during sleep.

When should tooth brushing start?

After the first teeth erupt through the gum you should wipe the teeth and gums gently, daily, with a clean damp washcloth or gauze pad, or use a 'finger brush'.

At about 18 months of age children can start to use a tooth brush with soft bristles. Teeth should be brushed twice a day – after breakfast and at bedtime.

Tooth paste is not recommended for children under the age of two years and only a smear of 'junior strength' fluoridated toothpaste is recommended per brushing for 2-6 year olds. Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste after brushing.

First visit the dentist – when should it be?

It is recommended that you take your baby for their first dental visit by 12 months of age. This early visit will allow your dentist to check for early childhood decay and to explain good dental health practices for primary teeth. Establishing a routine of regular dental checkups also ensures your child is comfortable visiting the dentist.

Give your child a great start to life with healthy 'baby' teeth.

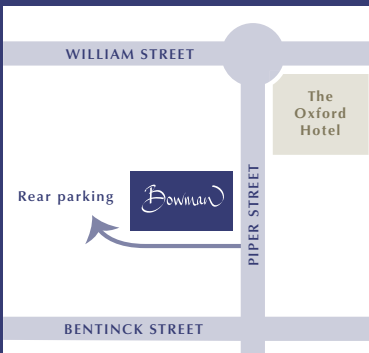


This card is designed purely as an introduction to dental health for young children. It is not intended to replace advice from a dental professional.

If you have any questions please feel free to talk to us in person.

We also have pamphlets containing more detailed information on this subject.

Kathy & team



Information courtesy of Australian Dental Association Inc., Mi-tec Media and the University of Adelaide.