



# BASIC ORAL CARE

## for School Aged Children

### What is bacterial plaque?

Bacterial plaque is a sticky layer of bacteria that constantly forms on teeth, even for young children. Plaque is composed of bacteria and food debris.

### Why is plaque significant?

When plaque is left on teeth it, converts the sugar in food and beverages to acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel creating tooth decay over time. Plaque is also irritating to gum tissue, and if not removed regularly, may cause gingivitis. It can also contribute to bad breath.

*Remove plaque regularly by brushing and flossing daily.*

### Toothbrushing tips



- Establish and maintain a brushing routine
- As a minimum, brush in the morning, before or 30 minutes after breakfast, and especially before bedtime
- The most important time to brush is before bedtime when saliva flow is reduced
- Parents should assist with brushing until a child develops fine motor co-ordination (approximately seven years old). Even when a child is able to brush, a parent should supervise brushing
- Teeth should be brushed in a regular pattern; make sure to reach the insides, outsides and chewing surfaces of all teeth
- Clean the tongue with a few gentle brush strokes

### Choosing the right toothbrush

- Use a child or youth-sized toothbrush depending on the age of the child
- Use a brush with soft rounded bristles, arranged at different heights
- If a power toothbrush is used, rotation/oscillation action is best

# What about toothpaste?

- Children under three years of age should use only water or a rice grain-sized amount of non-fluoridated toothpaste, unless otherwise advised by their oral health professional
- For children three years of age and older, teeth should be brushed with a green pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste at least twice a day
- Parents should dispense toothpaste for children under six years of age
- Children should spit out excess toothpaste



## How important is flossing?

- Flossing is important as it removes plaque/food from between the teeth where a toothbrush cannot reach
- Parents should floss the teeth of young children
- Around 10 to 11 years of age, children can begin to floss their own teeth but may require assistance
- If needed, flosspiks or floss holders can make flossing easier

## Sealants

- Sealants are a plastic coating that are applied to the grooves of molar teeth to prevent cavities
- Sealants may be appropriate for children at risk for dental decay



## Healthy eating and snacking

- The health of the mouth can be affected by diet and food habits
- Eat a healthy diet, limiting sugary and sticky foods
- A healthy snacking pattern consists of two to three snacks a day
- Healthy snack choices include fruits, vegetables, cheese and yogurt
- Water is the best drink between meals

To speak with the York Region Public Health Dental Program, call **1-800-735-6625** or visit [york.ca/dental](http://york.ca/dental) for more information.



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