

Is snacking healthy

for my child's teeth?

Oral health for children

For between meal snacks, choose nutritious foods for your child to promote good dental and general health.

Sugary snack foods can lead to cavities

Plaque is a sticky, clear film that forms on our teeth every day. Plaque contains germs (bacteria) that stick to teeth. The sugar in food and drinks reacts with plaque to form an acid that eats away the hard outer layer (enamel). Over time, this acid will make a hole in the enamel creating a cavity or dental decay.



Making good snacking choices helps prevent dental decay

Eating healthy food is always a good choice for both dental health and general health.

- Choose nutritious, unsweetened snack foods.
- Read ingredient lists when choosing snacks. Molasses, honey, fructose, glucose and sucrose are all types of sugar.
- It is better to eat sweets at meal time and not as snacks. The increased saliva flow during a meal dilutes sugars and helps wash them away.
- Reduce the time that sweet food stays in contact with the teeth. Limit sugared drinks, chewing sugared gum or sucking on candy over long periods of time.
- After your child eats sweet, sticky foods, brush your child's teeth.
- When brushing is not possible, rinse the mouth with water or chew sugar-free gum.

Try these suggestions for healthy snack foods

cheese	fruit
melba toast	rice cakes
muffins	bagel and cheese
bread sticks	pita bread with cheese
cottage cheese	yogurt
nuts and seeds (for older children)	half sandwich (cheese, egg, ham, salmon, tuna)
pita bread with hummus	unsweetened fruit juice
vegetables	vegetable juice
milk	hard boiled eggs



***Brushing and flossing every day
helps prevent tooth decay!***

For more information contact:
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www.gov.on.ca/health
or your local public health unit

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Based on materials developed by the City of Ottawa,
People Services Department

Are baby teeth important?

Oral health from birth to age five


Healthy baby teeth are important for eating, smiling, talking and keeping a place for adult teeth.

Good dental habits help prevent tooth decay and promote good general health

Birth to three years

- Use a clean cloth to wipe your baby's gums and teeth after each feeding.
- As soon as teeth appear, brush your baby's teeth at least twice a day using a small, soft-bristled toothbrush and water (no toothpaste).
- Once a month, lift your baby's top lip and check for decay. Look at the front and back of the top four teeth. If you see white or brown spots, take your baby to the dentist.
- When your baby is able to sit up alone, give baby a training cup to drink from.
- Never use corn syrup or sweeteners on a soother.
- Germs that cause cavities are passed from person to person. Never put your baby's soother or spoon in your mouth or allow sharing with others.
- If your baby sleeps with a bottle, use only water.
- Toddlers should stop using bottles between 18 months and two years of age.
- At two years of age, start taking your child to the dentist. Your child should visit the dentist regularly.

Three to five years

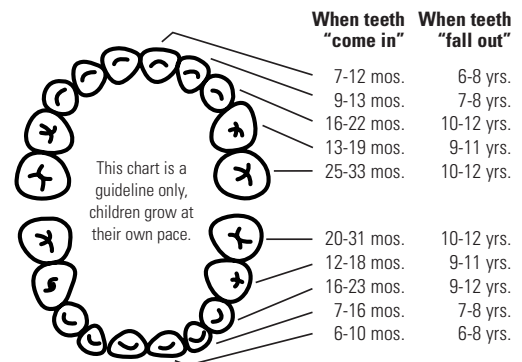
- At three years of age, start using fluoride toothpaste when brushing your child's teeth. Toddlers cannot brush their teeth properly, so you will have to do it for them. Be sure to rinse toothpaste from your child's mouth and do not let your child swallow or eat toothpaste.
- Brush twice a day, especially before bedtime.
- Use a child-sized, soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Apply a small amount of toothpaste about the size of a match head to the toothbrush.  Be sure to brush the hard-to-reach molars near the back.
- At three years of age, start flossing your child's teeth.



Good eating habits promote healthy teeth

Eating healthy, nutritious food is good for teeth, gums and general health. This is especially important for your growing child.

- Offer healthy snacks of fresh fruit, cheese, milk and crackers.
- Water is the best drink for quenching your child's thirst between meals.
- Limit fruit juice to mealtimes.
- Cut down on candies, sweets and drinks with sugar.
- When your child does have candies or sweet or sticky food, brush their teeth.



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Teething:

What can I expect?

Oral health for babies

A baby's first teeth appear before their first birthday in a process called teething.

Teething is a natural process

Your baby is born with a set of 20 teeth hidden beneath the gums. Teething is the process of these teeth working their way through the gums. The first teeth normally appear between six and 10 months of age with the rest following over the next two to three years. This is a guide; each child is different.

It is important that these first teeth are kept healthy, as they each keep a place for the adult teeth that come later. The natural loss of a baby's first teeth and arrival of adult teeth usually happens between the ages of six years and 12 years. The first adult teeth to appear are four molars. They come in behind the baby molars.

There are common signs of teething

Teething can cause minor discomfort for your baby. You might notice the following signs as teeth begin to appear through their gums. There is no need to worry; it is all part of the teething process. Your baby may:

- drool
- be more cranky and irritable
- have red cheeks and red, swollen gums
- show a need to chew on things.

Do not confuse teething with illness

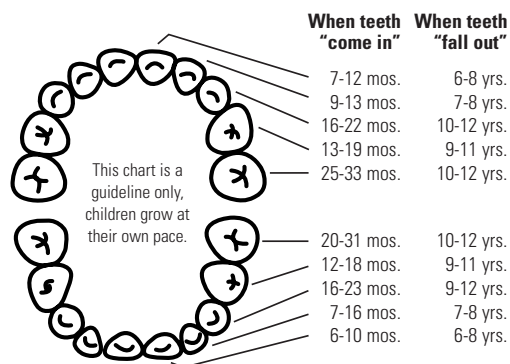
Fever, stuffiness, runny nose or diarrhea are *not* signs of teething. Blaming teething for these symptoms could delay the diagnosis of an ear infection, urinary tract infection, meningitis or other bacterial or viral infection.



You can help your baby during teething

Follow these tips to help your baby cope safely with teething:

- Directly massage an irritated, swollen gum with your finger for a couple of minutes. Massaging the gum with a clean, wet cloth that has been chilled in the refrigerator also works well.
- Babies massage their own gums by chewing on hard, smooth objects. Give them a teething ring, or a wet cloth that has been chilled.
- Give your child a piece of chilled banana. Avoid hard foods like raw carrots that could cause choking.
- If these suggestions don't seem to help, an infant's dose of acetaminophen (over-the-counter pain reliever) can be given for one day. Over-the-counter gels for teething should not be used unless advised by your doctor.



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Can pregnancy affect my oral health?

Oral health during pregnancy

Keeping your teeth and gums healthy during pregnancy has many benefits for you and your baby.

Your body undergoes many changes during pregnancy. Some of these can affect the health of your gums and teeth.

- Changes in your hormone levels can cause swollen gums that bleed during brushing and flossing (pregnancy gingivitis).
- The risk of having a premature or low birth-weight baby may be reduced if you have healthy gums and teeth.
- Morning sickness can leave stomach acids in your mouth. These acids can damage the surface of the teeth and promote tooth decay.



You can help yourself

Taking care of your oral health is always a good idea. While pregnant, there are particular things you can do to help.

- Keep your mouth clean. Brush twice each day using a fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily to remove plaque from between your teeth and gums.
- Eat healthy, nutritious food.
- Try eating dry toast or unsalted crackers before getting out of bed in the morning to help prevent morning sickness.
- If you do vomit, rinse your mouth with water or a fluoride mouth rinse. Rinsing helps protect your teeth from damaging stomach acids.
- If you have any questions about your oral health, ask your dentist or hygienist.

Dentists provide special care to pregnant women

Your dentist and dental hygienist have special training to look after your oral health while you are pregnant. It is best to arrange a visit in the middle three months of your pregnancy.

- Tell your dentist that you are pregnant.
- Regular dental cleanings and check-ups before, during and after your pregnancy are important.
- Put off routine x-rays until after your pregnancy.
- If your dentist recommends dental x-rays, the dental office will provide a leaded apron to shield you and your baby from the low dose of radiation used.
- Avoid taking drugs or medications while pregnant. If emergency dental treatment requires that you take drugs, be sure to discuss their use with your dentist and physician.



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