

# TOOTHY TIPS FOR PARENTS

Did you know that healthy baby teeth make way for healthy permanent teeth? Help your children keep their smiles strong and healthy for a lifetime by building good oral health habits now.



- **Brush twice a day.** As soon as your child's first tooth appears, help them brush twice a day, in the morning and at bedtime. You should continue brushing your child's teeth until you are sure they can brush on their own. Once your child can brush on their own, you should continue to supervise, reminding them to use good brushing techniques.
- **Floss daily.** Help your child floss between their teeth as soon as they have two teeth that touch.
- **See the dentist twice a year.** Children under the age of 21 should see the dentist for a cleaning and check-up every six months. If your child doesn't have a dentist, visit [SmileCalifornia.org](http://SmileCalifornia.org) and click on the Find A Dentist button to find a dentist near you.
- **Choose healthy foods and drinks.** A balanced diet is an important part of keeping your teeth and gums healthy. Help your child make healthier food choices. Be sure to limit sugary snacks and drinks, like juice and candy.

Remember, children learn by watching their parents. Be a good oral health role model by taking good care of your own teeth and gums!

## Good Oral Health Through the Years

### Babies

Your child's first dental visit should take place after their first tooth appears, but no later than their first birthday. Baby teeth are critical to your child's health and development. Kids can get cavities as early as age two, so visit the dentist as soon as possible.

### Kids

Children start to lose their baby teeth as early as five years old. This is when their permanent teeth begin to grow in. Ask the dentist about sealants to help protect your child's back teeth from cavities. Sealants are clear, protective coatings that are quick and painless.

### Teens

Continuing to eat sugary foods and drinks as teens can put them at a higher risk for tooth decay. Teenagers who get regular dental check-ups maintain good oral health well into adulthood. Keeping a travel-size toothbrush in a locker or backpack to brush after meals can also help reduce the risk of cavities and keep teeth bright — a boost to any teen's self-esteem.

### Pregnancy

Good oral health care helps prevent problems during pregnancy. As a Medi-Cal member, you are covered during pregnancy and 60 days past the birth of your baby. Regular brushing and flossing, eating a balanced diet and visiting your dentist regularly, will help reduce dental problems that may accompany pregnancy.



Parents, California law, Education Code Section 49452.8, requires that your child

have an oral health assessment (dental check-up) by May 31 in either kindergarten or first grade, whichever is his or her first year in public school. Assessments that have happened within the 12 months before your child enters school also meet this requirement. The law specifies that the assessment must be done by a licensed dentist or other licensed or registered dental health professional.



**For more information about oral health, and to learn about Medi-Cal dental services, visit [SmileCalifornia.org](http://SmileCalifornia.org).**