

# Healthy People Dental



## Baby Teeth Matter

Teaching your child good oral hygiene habits early can lead to a lifelong healthy smile, but did you know that just because babies don't have any visible teeth, doesn't mean they can't get cavities? A baby's 20 primary teeth are already present in the jaws at birth. And those baby teeth that begin coming through the gums around 6 months help set the stage for future smiles by keeping space in the jaw for adult teeth.

When a baby tooth is lost too early, the permanent teeth can drift into the empty space and make it difficult for other adult teeth to find room when they come in. This can make teeth crooked or crowded. That's why starting infants off with good oral care can help protect their teeth for decades to come. The ADA recommends that parents take children to a dentist no later than their first birthday and then at intervals recommended by their dentist.

### Cleaning Your Child's Teeth

Begin cleaning your baby's mouth during the first few days after birth by wiping the gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth. As soon as teeth appear, decay can occur. A baby's front four teeth usually push through the gums at about 6 months of age, although some children don't have their first tooth until 12 or 14 months.

For children younger than 3 years, caregivers should begin brushing children's teeth as soon as they begin to come into the mouth by using fluoride toothpaste in an amount no more than a smear or the size of a grain of rice. Brush teeth thoroughly twice per day (morning and night) or as directed by a dentist or physician. Supervise children's brushing to ensure that they use of the appropriate amount of toothpaste.

For children 3 to 6 years of age, use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Brush teeth thoroughly twice per day (morning and night) or as directed by a dentist or physician. Supervise children's brushing and remind them not to swallow the toothpaste. Until you're comfortable that your child can brush on his or her own, continue to brush your child's teeth twice a day with a child-size toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. When your child has two teeth that touch, you should begin flossing their teeth daily.

### Dental Emergencies

Accidents can happen anywhere, anytime. Knowing how to handle a dental emergency can mean the difference between saving and losing your child's permanent tooth. For all dental emergencies, it's important to take your child to the dentist or an emergency room as soon as possible. Here are some tips if your child experiences a common dental emergency:

- For a knocked-out tooth, keep it moist at all times. If you can, try placing the tooth back in the socket without touching the root. If that's not possible, place it in between your child's cheek and gum, or in milk. Call your dentist right away.
- For a cracked tooth, immediately rinse the mouth with warm water to clean the area. Put cold compresses on the face to keep any swelling down.
- If your child bites his tongue or lip, clean the area gently and apply a cold compress.
- For toothaches, rinse the mouth with warm water to clean it out. Gently use dental floss to remove any food caught between the teeth. Do not put aspirin on the aching tooth or gum tissues.
- For objects stuck in the mouth, try to gently remove with floss but do not try to remove it with sharp or pointed instruments.

### Healthy Mouth Recipe

#### Choco-Nana Milk Mixer

- 3 1/2 cups 1% low-fat Milk
- 1 package (4-serving size) chocolate flavor instant Pudding & Pie filling
- 1 tablespoon creamy Peanut butter
- 1 medium Banana peeled, cut into chunks

#### Preparation:

Pour 2 cups milk, pudding mix, peanut butter and banana into container with tight-fitting lid and shake until well blended, or put into blender container and blend on medium speed 1 minute or until smooth. Pour into large pitcher. Add remaining 1 1/2 cups milk; stir until blended. Serve at once or refrigerate and stir before serving. Mixture thickens as it stands. Thin with additional milk, if desired.

