

# Factsheet

## Children's Oral Health

### Babies

- Use a damp washcloth and clean your baby's gums by gently rubbing them.
- As teeth appear introduce a soft, child-size toothbrush.
- Do not use toothpaste. Just use water.
- Visit a dentist when the first teeth appear or by 12 months of age.



### Toddlers

- Brush with a soft child-size toothbrush.
- Use child-strength toothpaste from 18 months of age.
- Parents and carers are recommended to brush and floss their child's teeth.
- Brush twice daily.
- Floss teeth that touch together.



### Children (under six years)

- Parents and carers are recommended to continue brushing and flossing their child's teeth.
- Floss the teeth that touch together.
- Brush twice daily.
- Use child-strength fluoride toothpaste, unless your dentist recommends otherwise.



### Children (over six years)

- Continue to assist your child with brushing and flossing until 8-9 years of age.
- Brush twice daily.
- Floss teeth that touch together.
- Use adult-strength or 6+ fluoride toothpaste.



### Tips & Tricks

- 1 Spit out excess toothpaste, do not rinse out the mouth with water.
- 2 Make brushing fun! Play a song or use a smartphone app as a reminder to brush for the recommended two minutes.
- 3 Use positive reinforcement when visiting the dentist. Praise your child on their listening skills and ability to follow instructions.

#### 4 Do not use too much toothpaste.

For toddlers, squeeze toothpaste the size of a rice grain on the brush. Push the paste into the bristles.



For older children, use a 'pea-sized' amount of toothpaste.



# Factsheet

## First dental visits

### When should children have their first dental visit?

The first dental visit is recommended when the first teeth push into the mouth or by age 1, whichever comes first.

### What happens at the visit when a baby only has a few teeth?

The dentist will check that your child's teeth are healthy. They will also talk to you about:

- Tooth-friendly foods and drinks
- Tips for brushing and flossing
- Toothpaste
- Habits such as using a dummy or thumb-sucking
- Teething
- What to expect as your child keeps growing

### How can I prepare my child for a visit to the dentist?

- Play dentist at home, count your child's teeth, or read positive dental story books.
- Be positive about seeing the dentist.
- Do not tell your child to be brave, this means there is something to be scared of.
- Do not tell stories about your negative experiences, or use words like 'pull', 'needle', or 'drill'.
- Do not use dental visits as a threat or punishment for bad behaviour.

Watch these pro tips  
for caring for your  
baby's teeth



# Factsheet

## Food and drinks for children

### Choosing healthy snacks:

-  Try to make your child's snacks as healthy as their main meals.
-  Fresh foods are best.
-  Read the food label and list of ingredients. Choose foods that do not have sugar listed in the top three ingredients.
-  Avoid snack foods that are sticky, chewy, or sweet. These take longer to clear from the teeth. This can increase the risk of tooth decay.
-  Do not give foods or drinks that stay in the mouth for a long time. For example, a lollypop or sipping on juice from a bottle.
-  There is no need to give fruit juice to a baby under 1 year of age. Children over 1 year of age can have fruit juice occasionally. Only give 120-180ml in a cup instead of a bottle.

### How much fruit per day?

**1 serving per day:** 2-3 year olds

**1.5 servings per day:** 4-8 year olds

**2 servings per day:** over 8 year olds



### Tooth-friendly snack foods for children:

 **Fresh vegetables** such as carrot and celery pieces.

 **Fresh fruit** instead of fruit juice or dried fruit.

 **Yoghurt & cheese** is good for teeth except when extra sugar has been added. Read the food label and ingredients to check the sources of sugar.

### Tooth-friendly drinks for children:

 **Breastmilk or infant formula**

 **Cow's milk** after 12 months of age.

 **Water** after 12 months of age. Tap water is best.

Watch this pro-tip  
video on tooth-  
friendly diets



# Factsheet

## Sugary drinks

### What are sugary drinks?

- Sugary drinks include all drinks that have sugar as an ingredient.
- Soft drink, energy drink, sports drink, and fruit juice are common sugary drinks.

### Why are sugary drinks bad for my teeth?

Sugary drinks can include a lot of sugar! Some of these drinks also have food acids added as an ingredient. Drinking sugary drinks too often can damage teeth. The sugar can cause tooth decay. The acids can cause tooth erosion.

### What about sugar free drinks?

The drinks without sugar still have food acids added. These drinks can still cause tooth erosion.

Diet soft drinks have been associated with overeating and weight gain.

### What about fruit juice?

Fruit juice drinks include a lot of sugar. Even though the sugar comes from fruit, it can still cause tooth decay.

If you drink juice, limit your serve to 125ml.

A better option is drinking water and eating fresh fruit. This will be more filling.

### If you do drink a sugary drink, here are some tips to protect your teeth:

- Take a reusable water bottle with you to school, work or when out and about. Fill this with fresh tap water. It is good for your teeth and can save you money.
- Chew sugar free gum after drinking a sugary drink. This can help your body to make more saliva that can wash the sugary drink from your mouth.
- Drink water after you finish your sugary drink.

### No added sugar does not mean sugar free

**Beware:** Products that claim 'no added sugar' can still contain a LOT of sugar



Nutrition Information	
Serves per packing: 1	Serve size: 250ml
Energy	417.5kJ
Protein	1.5g
Fat, total	2g
- Saturated	0g
Carbohydrates	22.25g
- Sugars	20g





# Healthy mouths, healthy kids

## Caring for children's teeth

► Most childhood dental disease can be prevented by 4 easy steps



**1** Brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste

**2** Flossing daily

**3** Drinking tap water  
It's sugar-free. And in almost all of NSW it contains fluoride, which protects teeth against decay.

**4** Visiting the dentist for a check-up at least once a year



► Did you know tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in childhood?

Tooth decay occurs when bacteria in our mouths use sugars from foods and drinks to produce acids that attack tooth enamel (the hard outer layer of teeth). Tooth decay can cause pain, infection and tooth loss. Without treatment, it can destroy children's teeth and have a serious, lasting impact on their overall health and quality of life.

► Limit the amount of sugar consumed in foods and drinks



How much sugar do you drink?



**6 teaspoons**  
of sugar in one 250ml cup of fruit juice



**7 teaspoons**  
of sugar in one 300ml serve of flavoured milk



**8.5 teaspoons**  
of sugar in one 600ml bottle of sports drink



**9 teaspoons**  
of sugar in one 375ml can of soft drink



## How to brush

- Brush for two minutes twice a day, after breakfast and before bed
- Brush every surface of every tooth, all the way to the gums
- Use a gentle, circular motion to brush the outside surfaces (the ones that show when you smile) and the inside surfaces (the ones facing towards the back of the mouth)
- Gently scrub the chewing surfaces of the top and bottom teeth
- Spit out the toothpaste, don't swallow it
- Don't rinse the mouth after brushing
- **Children with braces** should brush their teeth gently after every meal, to clean away loose food and plaque from around brackets and wires
- **From 18 months to 6 years of age children should brush with a pea-sized amount of low-fluoride children's toothpaste**
- **Parents/carers should supervise brushing until children are 8 years old**
- **If you're on tank water or your town does not have fluoridated tap water, children should use adult-strength toothpaste. Talk to your dentist about when to start and how much to use**

## How to floss

- Floss every day to remove plaque and food particles from between your teeth
- Flossing should begin as soon as children have a full set of baby teeth
- Until children are 10 years old parents/carers should floss their teeth for them
- Wind about 45cm of floss around your middle fingers and rest it across your thumbs and index fingers
- Slide the floss between your teeth with gentle up-and-down/back-and-forth motions, to avoid damaging the gums
- Use a clean segment of floss for each tooth
- To clean the tooth at the point where it meets the gum, curl the floss and insert it gently under the gum

## Make good choices

- Drink tap water, it's sugar-free, and in almost all of NSW it contains fluoride, which protects teeth against decay.
- Choose healthy options like fresh fruit, cheese, plain yogurt and raw vegetables
- Avoid sugary foods like lollies, sweet biscuits, flavoured yogurts, muesli bars
- Avoid sticky foods like lollies, dried fruit, potato chips, crackers



## Medicare funded dental treatment for children

If your family receives Family Tax Benefit Part A or certain other government payments, your child may be eligible for Medicare funded treatment under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

For more information go to [www.adansw.com.au/Community/PublicCDBS](http://www.adansw.com.au/Community/PublicCDBS)



# Oral health tips for young children

## Tips for babies

### Caring for your baby's teeth

- Start cleaning your baby's teeth from the time they first appear (around 6-12 months of age)
- Use a soft, damp cloth to begin with then move to a small, soft children's toothbrush, to clean all surfaces of the teeth
- Clean your baby's teeth and gums twice a day, after breakfast and before bed
- Don't use toothpaste before your baby is 18 months of age unless directed by your dental practitioner
- Take your baby to see the dentist when their first tooth appears, or by their first birthday

### Guard against early decay

- Early decay is caused by frequent exposure to sugary drinks and foods including plain milk, formula and fruit juices
- Don't let your baby fall asleep with a bottle of milk, formula or juice in their mouth
- Replace bottles with a cup from 12 months of age
- Tap water should be the only drink in bottles and sippy cups except at meal /feed times.

### Teething tips

- Baby teeth usually start to appear between 6 to 12 months of age
- Pressure on the teeth and gums from chewing may help relieve discomfort
- Relieve tender gums with chilled (but not frozen) teething rings, washcloths or dummies, or gently rub your baby's gums with a clean finger

## Tips for toddlers and preschoolers

### Caring for toddlers' and preschoolers' teeth

- Brush your child's teeth twice a day, after breakfast and before bed
- From 18 months, use a pea-sized amount of low-fluoride toothpaste on a soft children's toothbrush
- Avoid giving children frequent snacks, especially sugary foods and drinks, between meals
- Limit snacks to two healthy choices per day of foods such as fruit, vegetable sticks and hard cheese
- Make tap water your child's usual drink. In most of NSW it contains fluoride, which protects against tooth decay
- Take your child with you to the dentist for a check-up at least once a year
- Baby teeth are important – care for them as you'd care for your child's permanent teeth
- Help your child brush their teeth until they are eight years old

### How to brush your child's teeth

- Brush for two minutes twice a day, after breakfast and before bed
- Use a pea-sized amount of low-fluoride children's toothpaste on a toothbrush with soft bristles

- Brush every tooth all the way to the gums
- Brush every surface of every tooth
- Use a gentle, circular motion to brush the outside surfaces (the ones that show when you smile) and the inside surfaces (the ones facing towards the back of the mouth)
- Gently scrub the chewing surfaces of the top and bottom teeth
- Take care that your child spits out the toothpaste and does not swallow it
- Don't rinse the mouth after brushing
- Don't let your child eat or lick toothpaste from the tube

### If your child won't cooperate with toothbrushing

- Let your child watch you brushing your own teeth as often as possible – children love to copy grownups!
- Try giving your child their own toothbrush to hold while you are cleaning their teeth
- Choose a song to play while you are brushing their teeth
- Let them watch a brushing app while you brush – there are lots to choose from!



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# Factsheet

## Fluoride

### What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a mineral that is found in rocks and soil, tea, vegetables, grains and water. Small amounts of fluoride are added to drinking water, toothpaste, and mouthwash.

### How does fluoride help the teeth?

Fluoride helps to:

- Make tooth enamel stronger.
- Protect teeth from developing tooth decay.
- Stop tooth decay that has just started to develop from getting worse.

### Fluoride in toothpaste

Children over 18 months and adults are recommended to use fluoride toothpaste when brushing their teeth.

In Australia, toothpaste for children aged 18 month to 6 years has less fluoride. Toothpaste for children older than 6 years and adults has 2-3 times more fluoride than children's toothpaste.

After brushing, spit out the extra toothpaste. Do not wash your mouth with water. This lets the fluoride from the toothpaste sit on the teeth and protect them for longer.

### Why is fluoride added to water?

Fluoride works best when a low level is always present in the mouth. Drinking water that includes fluoride does this!

The amount of fluoride added to drinking water is watched closely to make sure the correct amount is added.

Drinking fluoridated water helps to prevent tooth decay in people of all ages. Research shows it can decrease tooth decay in both children and adults.



# Factsheet

## Teething



Symptoms of teething can start as early as 3 months of age. It can continue up to 2.5 – 3 years of age.

### Symptoms that may suggest a child is teething

- Drooling
- Gum rubbing
- Irritability
- Biting/mouthing

### Symptoms that are not due to teething

- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty sleeping
- Cough
- Rash
- Diarrhoea
- Seizures
- High-grade fever

If a child has any of these symptoms, it is best to talk to a doctor to make sure they are not sick.

### How to help soothe your baby's discomfort

- Affection, cuddles, and attention.
- Gently massage your baby's gums with the back of a cold spoon or a clean finger and wet cloth.
- For baby's over 6 months of age, consider using teething rusks.
- Pain relief medications, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen.

\* Ask your dentist, doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for advice before using any pain medication.

### Be careful if you choose to use the following remedies

#### Over-the-counter teething gels

Cold gels can help. This may not last long as the gel can be washed away by saliva.

Baby's can swallow the teething gel put on their gums. It is hard to know how much gel is swallowed. This can make the throat numb and be a choking hazard.

#### Pacifier/dummy

Do not cover a dummy with jam or honey. If your baby has teeth, this can cause tooth decay.

#### Amber beads

Beaded necklaces or bracelets may be a choking hazard. They are not likely to help with pain.



# Tips for cleaning between teeth

Both children and adults should clean between their teeth every day.

A toothbrush cannot reach the spaces between the teeth well.

Clean between your teeth with floss, interdental brushes or using other items that your dentist has recommended.

Cleaning between your teeth removes food and bacteria that build up every day.

Parents should start cleaning between their kid's teeth once they have teeth touching side-by-side. This is about 2 years of age.

**3 IN 4**  
Aussie adults  
rarely or never  
clean between  
their teeth

## Floss



- A thin string that is pushed between the teeth to clean the spaces in between.

**Watch this video  
for pro tooth  
flossing tips**



## Interdental brush

- A small, straight bristle brush that is placed in the gaps between the teeth.
- Useful if you have large gaps between your teeth, braces, missing teeth or gum disease.
- Brush can be used multiple times before it needs to be thrown away.
- Brushes are available in different sizes.



## Water flosser

- Water is sprayed with pressure into the spaces between the teeth.
- Can be useful if you have large gaps between your teeth, missing teeth, braces, or gum disease.



## Floss pick/flossette

- A short piece of string floss is strung between two prongs that are attached to a handle.
- Can be helpful if you have trouble reaching into the mouth using string floss, for parents cleaning between their children's teeth or children learning to floss.



# Tips for brushing teeth

Brush for two minutes, twice per day; once in the morning and once at night.

Choose a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles.

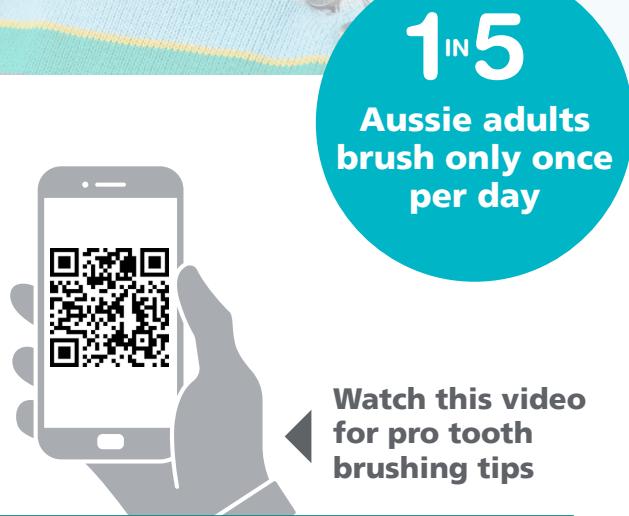
Follow the same brushing routine every day. This can help to make sure you reach every tooth.

Hold the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle towards the gums and brush gently in small circles or a back-and-forth motion.

Do not scrub from side to side, this can damage your teeth and gums.

Gently brush the top of your tongue.

After brushing, spit out the toothpaste but do not rinse your mouth with water.



## Replace your toothbrush

- Once the bristles spread apart and sit outside the plastic base of the toothbrush's head,
- after having a cold, the flu or a sore throat, or
- every three months.

## Use a fluoride toothpaste

- Fluoride helps to prevent tooth decay. It can also stop tooth decay from getting worse when it is just starting to develop.
- Both children and adults are recommended to use fluoride toothpaste.
- 'Children's' toothpaste is recommended for kids aged 18 months to 6 years. These toothpastes have less fluoride.
- If you are at high risk of developing tooth decay, your dentist may recommend that you use a high strength fluoride toothpaste.

