

Brush Up on Healthy Teeth

Simple Steps for Kids' Smiles



1 *Start cleaning teeth early.*

- As soon as the first tooth appears, begin cleaning by wiping with a clean, damp cloth every day.
- When more teeth come in, switch to a small, soft toothbrush.
- Begin using toothpaste with fluoride when your child is 2 years old.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride before age 2 if your child's doctor or dentist recommends it.

2 *Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste.*

- Use only a small amount of toothpaste (about the size of a pea). *Fluoride is important for fighting cavities. But if children younger than 6 years old swallow too much fluoride, their permanent teeth may have white spots.*
- Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste and to rinse well after brushing.

3 *Supervise brushing.*

- Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone.
- Continue to closely watch brushing to make sure the child is doing a good job and using only a small amount of toothpaste.

4 *Talk to your child's doctor or dentist.*

- Ask the doctor or dentist about your child's specific fluoride needs.
Children older than 6 months may need extra fluoride if the drinking water does not have enough.
Children younger than 6 years old should not use a fluoride mouth rinse unless recommended by a doctor or dentist.
- After age 2, most children get the right amount of fluoride to help prevent cavities if they drink water that contains fluoride and brush their teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

**Early care for your children's teeth will
protect their smile and their health.**

