

Oral Health is an important part of your child's overall health. Now that your baby is officially a toddler there are new things to learn, first by watching others and then by doing it "all by myself."

Oral Health Information

There are so many resources about oral health on the internet. Here are a few of the websites that have more information for health care providers, pregnant women, and parents.

Remember, keep the connection – between the health of your teeth and gums and your overall health.

National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center
<http://www.mchoralhealth.org>

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
<http://www.aapd.org>

Connecticut Oral Health Initiative
<http://www.ctoralhealth.org>

American Dental Association
<http://www.ada.org>

National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition
<http://hmhb.org>

For more information contact:



Smiles Across Southeast Connecticut
943 North Rd.
Groton, CT 06340
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Fax: 860-448-4885
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Making the Oral Health Connection...

One Smile at a Time



THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
of Southeastern Connecticut

Making

the Connection

Oral Health and Healthy Children



Keeping your toddlers teeth and gums healthy

Tooth decay and gum disease are the two most common forms of dental disease. Dental disease is caused by bacteria. Every time your child eats sugary foods bacteria in his mouth turns the sugar into acid. This is called an “acid attack.” The more attacks on your child’s teeth the more likely it is cavities will develop.

As your baby enters the toddler stage of 18 months, they should begin drinking from a cup, have their gums and emerging teeth cleaned daily, and visit the dentist for the first time.

If your child has not had their first visit to a dentist make an appointment as soon as possible. Children and adults should visit the dentist every six months. If you need help finding dental care for your family, contact SMILES Across Southeast Connecticut at 448-4045.

Toddlers: 18 months – Age 4

Good oral health habits start early but so can disease. Keeping teeth and gums clean, reducing the spread of bacteria, and providing good nutrition will give your toddler a good start to healthy teeth and gums. Follow these recommendations:

- ✍ Brush your toddler’s teeth and gums twice daily. Use a soft toothbrush with a small pea-sized amount of non-fluoride toothpaste. (Standing behind them and reaching around to their mouth will give you the best angle)

- ✍ Begin using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride when your child is two years old. (Children can use more toothpaste when they learn to spit out the toothpaste and rinse their mouth after brushing.)
- ✍ Avoid spreading germs that occur when you share eating utensils and cups with your toddler.
- ✍ Talk to your doctor or dentist about fluoride in your water or using fluoride supplements to strengthen teeth and help protect against cavities.
- ✍ Lift your toddler’s lips to look for signs of infection which include red, swollen or spotted gums. If signs of infection are seen contact your dentist.
- ✍ Eat regular nutritious meals and choose healthy snacks such as fruit, vegetables, cheese, and whole grains.
- ✍ Limit snacks with high amounts of sugar or snacks that are sticky and do not dissolve quickly. Also limit juices with added sugar.
- ✍ Never give your toddler soda or sports drinks.
- ✍ Teach children “good safety” to prevent injuries to the mouth (such as not running with objects in their mouth).



Doing it “all by myself”

Teaching children to make oral health a priority can be a challenge. Starting early and making brushing a fun and important part of your family’s daily routine will encourage children to begin taking good care of their teeth. Here are some helpful tips:

- ✍ **Model** good oral health behavior. Let your child watch you brush and floss your teeth. Teach them to brush slow, reaching all teeth, gums and tongue. (flossing for them will come later when more teeth emerge)
- ✍ **Brush** your child’s teeth until they have the skill to handle the toothbrush by themselves. (usually by age 4 or 5)
- ✍ **Supervise** children as they start brushing on their own. Encourage them to brush in a circular motion.
- ✍ **Help** children brush for 2-3 minutes using favorite songs or creative activities like counting or reciting the ABE while brushing your child’s teeth.
- ✍ **Include** your toddler while shopping for toothpaste and brushes at the store. (putting it in the cart, etc.)
- ✍ **Encourage** your child to brush by using phrases such as, “When you have brushed your teeth you can... go out to play, watch TV, play with your toys” etc.

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