



# DID YOU KNOW...

## TOOTH DECAY IS ONE OF THE TOP CHRONIC INFECTIOUS DISEASES AMONG CHILDREN IN THE U.S.?

Many parents are surprised to learn that tooth decay can begin as early as age 1. Children with tooth decay are far more likely to develop immediate and long term oral health issues, including pain, infections, difficulty speaking, problems eating food, tooth discoloration and even tooth loss.

But with the help of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, you can join the Monster-Free Mouths Movement and keep your child's mouth free of creatures like Tartar the Terrible, Ginger Bite-Us and Tooth D.K. Below are important tips to help kids have monster-free mouths—at all ages!



### BIRTH-2 YEARS OLD:

- 🦷 Before teeth erupt, **CLEAN YOUR BABY'S MOUTH AND GUMS** with a soft cloth or infant toothbrush at bath time. This helps prepare your baby for the teeth cleaning to come.
- 🦷 If your baby is given a bottle when going to sleep, use **NOTHING BUT WATER**. Bottles containing any sugary liquids or carbohydrates such as milk, formula or fruit juice, put teeth under attack from bacterial acid all night long.
- 🦷 **NEVER DIP A PACIFIER IN ANYTHING SWEET**; that pesky Tooth D.K. can show up.
- 🦷 Give your baby a firm rubber **TEETHING RING** to chew on to help with the discomfort and potential pain of **TEETHING**. Avoid liquid-filled teething rings, or any plastic objects that might break.
- 🦷 Talk to your child's pediatric dentist about the **RIGHT AMOUNT OF FLUORIDE** for your child. Ask if your child should be brushing with toothpaste that contains fluoride and/or if your child needs a fluoride supplement.
- 🦷 Take your child to see a pediatric dentist by his or her first birthday to establish a **DENTAL HOME**. Your dentist can help you establish a daily regimen, provide recommendations and determine your next visit.



### 2-5 YEARS OLD:

- 🦷 Remember to brush your child's teeth at least **TWICE A DAY**, once in the morning and once at night. The most important time to brush your child's teeth is **RIGHT BEFORE BEDTIME**.
- 🦷 Schedule dental visits **EVERY SIX MONTHS** to keep away Mouth Monsters, especially the dreaded Tooth D.K. The routine teeth cleanings at regular check-ups help remove pests like Tartar the Terrible and Ginger Bite-Us.
- 🦷 Sucking on a thumb, finger and pacifier can affect your child's teeth the same way: sucking for prolonged periods of time may cause the upper front teeth to tip outward or not come in properly. Most children stop this habit on their own; if not, try to **DISCOURAGE IT BY AGE 3** or ask your dentist for other creative ideas.
- 🦷 Keep an **EYE ON SNACKING**—ideally children should have no more than three snacks a day.
- 🦷 Parents can begin **FLOSSING** for their children when any two teeth are touching.
- 🦷 **AVOID JUICES** which literally bathe teeth in sugar. Try to limit the amount of juice you give to your child to less than 6 oz. per day.
- 🦷 Talk to your child's pediatric dentist about the **RIGHT AMOUNT OF FLUORIDE** for your child. Ask if your child should be brushing with toothpaste that contains fluoride and/or if your child needs a fluoride supplement.



### SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN:

- 🦷 Parents should supervise the brushing of teeth for school-aged children until they are **SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS OLD**.
- 🦷 When teeth are touching, it is time to **BEGIN FLOSSING**. Ask the pediatric dentist for tips on flossing your child's teeth.
- 🦷 In addition to brushing and flossing your child can **CHEW GUM WITH XYLITOL**, a non-sugar naturally occurring substance, to stimulate saliva flow which helps to clean the mouth (just make sure to ask the teacher!).
- 🦷 Remember to **PROTECT YOUR CHILD'S TEETH WITH A MOUTHGUARD** when they participate in physical activities, including sports and leisure activities. Consult your child's pediatric dentist to determine which type of mouthguard is most appropriate for your child.
- 🦷 **AVOID CARBONATED BEVERAGES** which can erode enamel on teeth; sport drinks and juice pouches are also bad for teeth as they keep acid levels high—which the Mouth Monsters like!

Join the Monster-Free Mouths Movement today! Visit [MYCHILDRENSTEETH.ORG](http://MYCHILDRENSTEETH.ORG) for tips and resources, including a pediatric dentist finder and a fun Mouth Monsters toolkit to help encourage healthy dental habits for your child.

