

When to brush

- Brushing should be done by your child at least twice a day
- Do not use a toothpaste with fluoride until your child can spit into the sink
- Re-brush your child's teeth ("check" their brushing) at least once a day, preferably at bedtime
- Once brushed, nothing but water before bed

How to brush

- You will see better, and your child will tolerate having his/her teeth brushed if you do not use toothpaste. Think of it as less commotion in their mouth
- Once your child can spit in the sink, they should use toothpaste whenever they brush
- Use a routine so you get everything brushed thoroughly
- We tell our patients and parents "cheek side, tongue side, and chewing side; front and back; top and bottom"
- As you brush, think of yourself gently massaging your child's gums with the toothbrush
- We advise brushing back to front so your child is not poked with the toothbrush when they tighten their cheeks (and they all will!!)

Why brush

- Bacteria, which make acid from sugars in your diet, attach to teeth in a sticky substance called plaque
- The longer plaque "matures", the more acid making bacteria it contains
- Brushing cleans away this plaque, resetting it's maturity
- Like sweeping a floor, it is only cleaned off when the brush passes across it
 - This is why it is important to brush in a routine so no teeth are missed
- Children often get decay at the gumline, so massaging the gums is important
- Nighttime is the most important time to remove the bacteria
 - Saliva levels, the body's defense against cavities, are very low at night

Helpful tips

- Do not put your child to bed with a bottle
- Beware of sippy cups containing anything but water
 - Do not let your child carry cup around for long periods
- Do not overuse a pacifier
 - Leave it out once child spits it out
 - Never put honey or sweets on pacifier
- Never give sweets, juice, or soda before bedtime
- Give healthy snacks between meals, with occasional "treats"
- Juices and sweets will not damage teeth when taken with meals
- Always chew sugar free gum over sugar gum
 - Sugar free gum does not feed the bacteria
 - It will stimulate saliva flow, the body's defense against cavities

