

## Tips for parents

# You can help your children learn to protect their smiles FOR A LIFETIME!



### The key is to “Start Early”

- **Show your kids** that practicing good oral health is important and can be fun by practicing good oral health yourself.
- **Take your children** to the dentist regularly – usually every six months or as directed by your dentist – for routine cleanings and checkups. This is not only good for the mouth, but the psyche, as kids can build a comfort level with their dentist as a result of routine visits.
- **Always ask your children** if they brushed their teeth before they leave for school and when they are getting ready for bed. Reminders are helpful.
- **Remember** that a travel toothbrush can be easily packed in your child’s backpack so that he or she can brush after snacks and lunch while at school.
- **Teach your children** the importance of flossing too. Just as brushing is important in preventing cavities, flossing is just as important for between the teeth. Flossing also helps to prevent gum disease, which can contribute to health complications later in life.
- **Encourage your children** to eat breakfast every day. There’s evidence that children who eat breakfast are less likely to eat sugary snacks throughout the day.<sup>1</sup> It really is the most important meal!
- **Adolescents should be encouraged** to use a straw when drinking soda so their teeth are exposed to less sugar.
- **Replace sugary snacks** with healthy alternatives such as fruit, cheese and crackers.
- **Leave little treats** from the “Tooth Fairy,” every now and then, to reward your child for practicing good oral health.
- **You should pick a dentist** that you and your family will like and trust. It will make the experience more enjoyable for everyone.

1. SanSone, A. E. (2012, August 24). *Unhealthy kids' health habits and how to fix them*. Retrieved from <http://www.letsmove.gov/blog/2012/08/24/unhealthy-kids-health-habits-and-how-fix-them>

**GO YOU**<sup>SM</sup>



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