

Older Child Pamphlet

Keeping Your Child's Mouth Healthy

A health mouth helps kids eat, speak, smile, and sleep well.

(Age 5–15)



Why A Healthy Mouth Matters

- Pain from cavities may make it harder for kids to concentrate in school and learn.
- Children with cavities sometimes miss school, because of toothaches or dentist visits. This can lead to lower grades for your kids, and require you to take time off work.
- Your child might be less likely to smile if they don't want to show their teeth, making it harder for them to make friends or feel confident about themselves.

What We Can Do To Make Sure Your Child Has A Healthy Mouth

At Home

- Brush twice a day (especially before bed) with a soft bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. NOTE: Children can typically brush their teeth without your help once they can tie their own shoes.
- Floss once a day especially once the teeth start to touch.
- Eat a healthy diet!
- Drink tap water with fluoride to help teeth stay strong and prevent cavities.

At School

- Sometimes dental clinicians will visit your child's school for dental screenings and to provide fluoride varnish or sealants, preventing missed school or work time. Check with your child's school to see if they provide this!

What To Expect At The Dentist

Go to the dental office for regular preventive and other necessary care.

At the Dental Clinic

A **dental clinic** might include a dentist or dental hygienist looking in the mouth, taking x-rays, and cleaning the teeth. They might also include:

- **Fluoride varnish** is a sticky gel/substance that is painted on teeth to prevent cavities, slow cavities, or stop cavities from getting worse. Fluoride is a mineral that strengthens teeth.
- **Dental Sealants** are thin protective coatings that are placed on the top of the back teeth to prevent cavities by blocking food and germs from building up. Ask your dentist about applying dental sealants when their first set of permanent molars or back teeth appear.

Schedule for the whole family. If other family members have cavities, your child is more likely to get them too. If you have healthy oral health habits, so can your child.

Important Topics That Impact Oral Health

Injury

- It is common for kids to chip a tooth, knock one out, or have cuts and bruises in the mouth from playing sports or just being a kid.
- Prevent an injury by having them wear a mouthguard while playing sports.
- Call your dentist if your child loses a tooth, or is in a lot of pain.

Smoking

- Smoking, vaping, or chewing tobacco can cause cancer and be harmful to your health.
- Talk to your child early about not using tobacco and/or vaping and don't smoke or vape yourself.
- Children are also less likely to smoke if family members do not smoke. Your doctor can give you resources to help you quit and your pediatrician can help talk with your child about not using tobacco.

HPV

- The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) affects all genders and is known to cause cancer, including oral cancer. There is a safe and effective vaccine that prevents HPV infections and cancer. This vaccine is recommended for all children age 11–12, but may be given to children as young as 9. Talk to your pediatrician to learn more.

Food

- What children eat and drink can impact the whole body, including the mouth.
- Provide fruits, vegetables, and fluoridated tap water.
- Limit juices, sugar-sweetened beverages, and sweet snacks. 100% juice doesn't have added sugar, but too much can lead to cavities.

Resources

Need Help Finding A Dentist Who Accepts Medicaid or CPH+?

[DentaQuest's website](#) has information on dentists and insurance.

Need Help With Quitting Tobacco?

[Colorado Quitline](#)

Need Help Affording Healthy Food?

[Hunger Free Colorado](#)

Questions About HPV?

The [CDC](#) has information on HPV.

Talk to your doctor, pediatrician, or dentist if you have more questions.

Healthy Habits

A healthy diet reduces your child's risk for cavities, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. A healthy mouth means a healthy kid. A healthy mouth makes it easier for your child to eat, talk, sleep, and learn.

Help your child have healthy oral habits early.



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