



BRUSH UP on children's dental health

Brush children's teeth as soon as they come in

Using children's toothpaste with fluoride, start brushing a child's budding teeth and gums the moment a tooth comes in. Don't worry about baby's mouth being too sensitive—if they're old enough to grow a tooth, they're old enough to have it brushed.

Brush your preschoolers' teeth for them

Small children may be old enough to put a toothbrush in their mouth, but many can't scrub well enough to get rid of plaque. Parents should help brush kids' teeth for them until they are about 6 years old to make sure a thorough job is done.

Have kids skip the final rinse

Once our teeth are brushed, most of us rinse the excess toothpaste from our mouths. The water may make our mouths feel cleaner, but toothpaste with fluoride actually works better if you let it sit after brushing.

Infant oral health

A first dental checkup is recommended by a child's first birthday. Since cavities are almost completely preventable, children should receive early and regular oral/dental care so dentists can help parents understand potential problems and offer advice for preventing dental problems.

Check on the need for braces early

Orthodontists can spot subtle problems with jaw growth and emerging teeth while some baby teeth are still present, and some orthodontic problems may be easier to correct if found early. Most children begin active orthodontic treatment between ages 9 and 14, so when your child is around 7-years-old it's a good idea to start asking her dentist about whether or not braces will be needed in the future.

Look out for TMJ

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ), the joint that connects the jaw to the skull and helps us open and close our mouths, is the most commonly used joint in our bodies. Excessive grinding or clenching of the teeth can cause TMJ dysfunction, leading to jaw pain, earaches and an inability to open or close the mouth properly. If your child's tooth grinding or clenching is affecting his or her jaw function, ask your doctor about speaking with a maxillofacial surgeon.

Be smart about wisdom teeth

Wisdom teeth are the last permanent teeth to develop, but sometimes there's not enough room left in the mouth for them to fit properly. When this happens, wisdom teeth can become impacted, leading to pain, gum disease and crowding of other teeth. As your children hit their teenage years, make sure they pay special attention to brushing the back of the mouth, and get in the habit of asking their dentist about wisdom teeth development and removal.



Boston Children's Department of Dentistry has experts in pediatric dentistry and orthodontics. Please call **617-355-6571** or visit bostonchildrens.org/dentistry

Boston Children's Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery has experts in wisdom tooth removal, TMJ dysfunction treatment and other orthognathic surgery procedures. Please call **617-355-2796** or visit bostonchildrens.org/oralsurgery