

Tips for brushing your child's teeth and making it a good experience:

- **Choose a toothbrush made for children.** Look for toothbrushes with soft bristles and a small head made for brushing a child's teeth. Let your child pick a toothbrush that is a favorite color. Or let your child pick one that has a favorite character on the handle.
- **Use oral hygiene aids.** If it is hard for your child to hold a toothbrush, look for a toothbrush with a thick handle, or make the handle thicker by putting it inside a tennis ball. The toothbrush handle can also be strapped to your child's hand with a hair band or Velcro. Another way is to place a hand over the child's hand to guide the toothbrush as the child brushes.

- **Use fluoride toothpaste that your child likes.** Fluoride toothpaste comes in different flavors and colors. Find one that your child likes and feels good in his or her mouth.
- **Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste.** An adult should always place toothpaste on the toothbrush. For children under age 3, use a smear (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste. For children ages 3 to 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste. Encourage your child to spit and not swallow the remaining toothpaste.
- **Make toothbrushing fun.** Sing a song while brushing your child's teeth. Or count or say the alphabet while you brush your child's teeth. You can also tell a story, say a nursery rhyme, or make animal sounds while brushing.



Use a smear for children under age 3.



Use a pea-size amount for children ages 3 to 6.

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Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles

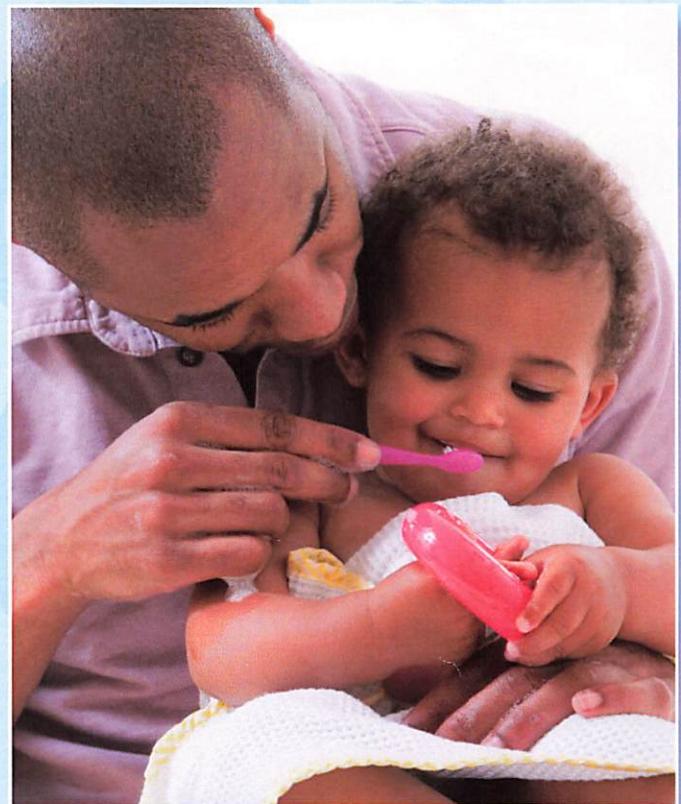


Toothbrushing Tips for Your Child with a Disability

Some children with disabilities need extra help to take care of their teeth. Young children, especially those with a physical, emotional, behavioral, intellectual, or communication disability, may not have the fine motor skills they need to clean their teeth well. It's important to brush and help your child with toothbrushing.



School readiness begins with health!



Baby teeth are important for children to:

- **Chew and eat foods.** Children need to eat healthy foods every day to grow and be strong. Children with tooth decay are less likely to eat crunchy foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Being able to eat these foods promotes good nutrition and a healthy weight.
- **Speak clearly.** Children who lose baby teeth too early may have trouble making certain sounds. This can make it hard to understand the child. A child may need speech therapy to improve speech problems that may develop because of missing teeth.
- **Keep space for adult teeth.** Baby teeth hold space for adult teeth growing in the jaw. If a baby tooth is lost too early, other teeth that

are already in the mouth will move into the space. It can block out the adult tooth trying to come in and cause crowding. The upper and lower jaws may not meet properly because of the crooked teeth.

- **Stay healthy.** Tooth decay in baby teeth can lead to infections that can cause fever and pain. If not treated, the infection from tooth decay can spread to other parts of the head and neck and lead to severe swelling.
- **Have self-confidence.** Children with decayed front teeth tend to not smile or may cover their mouth when talking. Sometimes they stop playing with other children. A healthy smile helps give children the self-confidence needed to have good social experiences.



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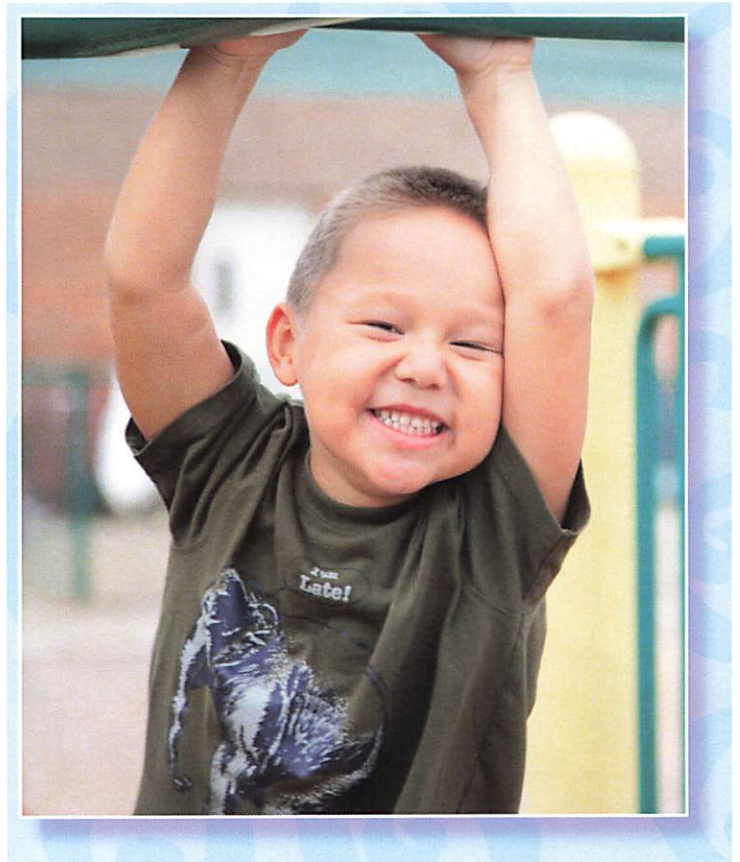
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Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles



Understanding Why Baby Teeth Are Important

Baby (primary) teeth are a child's first set of teeth. A baby's teeth start to come in at 6 to 10 months. By the time a child is 2½ to 3 years old, all 20 baby teeth will have come into the mouth. Taking care of a child's baby teeth is important for the child's overall health and development.



School readiness begins with health!