



# TINY SMILES

## A Give Kids A Smile® Program

## Dear Dental Professional,

You educate patients about oral health and hygiene every day. When discussing the oral health of children between birth and age 5, make sure parents and caregivers know the facts. Many parents are surprised to learn that baby teeth are at risk for decay as soon as they first appear. It is vital for parents and caregivers to understand the connection between oral health and overall health for themselves and their children.

To help reinforce positive oral health practices, the American Dental Association has provided these free resources to share with parents and caregivers. By emphasizing that tooth decay is preventable with proper care techniques, parents and caregivers can help give their children bright smiles and healthy futures! Thank you for your efforts in raising awareness about children's oral health and protecting those tiny smiles.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay is one of the most common chronic health conditions of children in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Untreated tooth decay can lead to pain and infections, which can affect a child's ability to speak, eat, play, and learn.<sup>2</sup> A National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey found that 23 percent of children ages 2–5 had dental cavities in primary teeth.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Children's Oral Health," May 14, 2019. Available at [www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/children\\_adults/child.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/children_adults/child.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Dye BA, Thornton-Evans G, Li X, Iafolla TJ. Dental caries and sealant prevalence in children and adolescents in the United States, 2011–2012. NCHS data brief, no. 191. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2015. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db191.pdf>

## HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS

**HANG THE POSTER (Page 5)** Display this oral health poster in a hallway, waiting room or another area where parents or caregivers are likely to see it.

**HAND OUT THE FAMILY ACTIVITY SHEETS (Pages 2-4)** Make copies of these sheets and include them in oral health goody bags or hand them out to parents or caregivers.

**COPY AND SHARE THE INFORMATIONAL SHEET (Page 6)** Distribute the sheets to parents and caregivers during visits and review the oral health information together.

### COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- ▶ Talk to expectant mothers about the importance of optimum oral health throughout pregnancy. They need to understand that regular dental care during pregnancy is safe and important. And explain that their baby's teeth begin to develop between the third and sixth months of pregnancy.
- ▶ Talk with parents and caregivers about the importance of their children's baby teeth and oral health needs between birth and age 5.
- ▶ Discuss and demonstrate effective gum-cleaning and toothbrushing techniques.
- ▶ Encourage parents to take their children to the dentist for a first checkup after the first tooth appears or by the time the child turns 1. Tell them what to expect during the visit so that they can prepare their children for the exam.
- ▶ Discuss the importance of proper nutrition.
- ▶ For additional resources, including Spanish translations of the resources and activities, visit [ADA.org/TinySmiles](http://ADA.org/TinySmiles).

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# HEALTHY DENTAL HABITS

Developing good dental health habits with your child early on and practicing them daily will help your child's smile and overall health. Baby teeth are not just placeholders. They are important and should be protected. Take a look at the tips below to help your child have healthy teeth.



## CHOOSE HEALTHY DRINKS

Breastfeed your baby until at least six months of age, if possible. Then fill your baby's bottle with formula, milk, or water. Don't put sugary drinks in your baby's bottle.



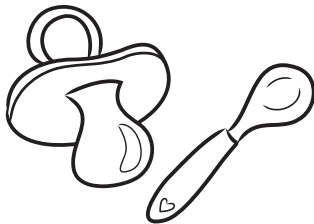
## FINISH BOTTLES BEFORE BED

Finish bottle feedings before putting your baby down to sleep. Wipe baby's gums after each feeding.



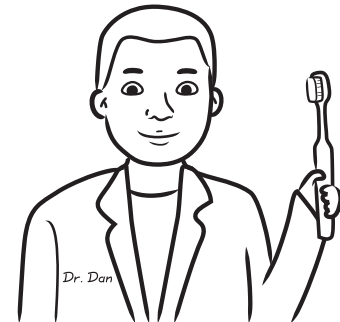
## INTRODUCE TRAINING CUP

Your child should be ready to drink from a cup between 12 and 24 months. The training cup will help your child learn how to use a regular cup. The best drink for your child's teeth is water with fluoride. Juice should only be served during mealtimes.



## DO NOT PASS ALONG GERMS

Do not put pacifiers or feeding spoons in your mouth — you can pass cavity-causing germs to your child. Rinse pacifiers with water to clean them.



## SEE THE DENTIST

Take your child to the dentist for a first checkup after the first tooth appears or by the time your child turns 1.

## CLEANING GUMS AND TEETH

- ▶ **BIRTH TO 1ST TOOTH** Gently wipe baby's gums with a clean, damp, soft washcloth or gauze after each feeding.
- ▶ **1ST TOOTH TO 3 YEARS OLD** Brush your child's teeth two times a day (morning and night). Use a baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice.
- ▶ **3 TO 5 YEARS OLD** Brush your child's teeth for two minutes, two times a day. Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste on a child's toothbrush. Make it a fun activity — sing a silly song or make a game out of it using a timer.
- ▶ Supervise brushing until your child can spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it, around age 6.

Contact your child's dentist or pediatrician if you have questions about your child's dental health or teething, and ask about fluoride varnish for your child's teeth.



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# DENTIST DAY



Hooray, hooray! It's dentist day! I put on  
my shoes and zip up my coat.  
My mom sings a song as we drive along:

*Every day we all must brush,  
Even when we're in a rush. 🎵  
Eating healthy all year long,  
Helps keep our teeth super strong.*

🎵 *Count them,  
Clean them,  
Make them shine; 🎵*

*The dentist is a friend of mine!*

At the dentist's office, I sit on Mom's or Dad's  
lap. Then Dr. Lisa comes in.

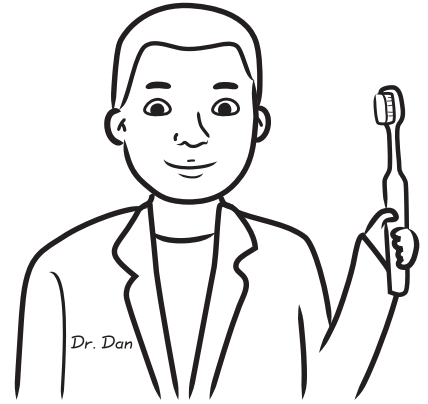
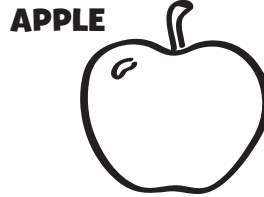
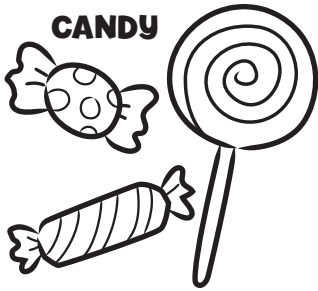
She checked my gums when I was just a  
baby. Now she counts my teeth.

The chair goes up and she shines a light  
into my mouth to help her see if my teeth  
are healthy.

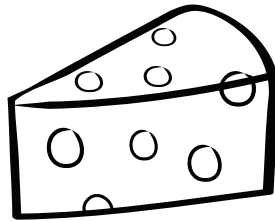
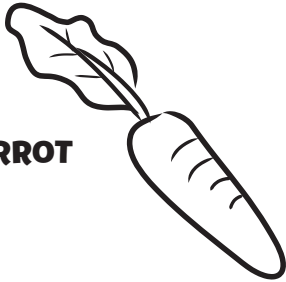
She cleans my teeth with a tool that spins and  
buzzes. *Oops!* She gets my chin wet. Now  
my smile is all sparkly. Thank you, Dr. Lisa.  
I promise to brush two times a day for two  
minutes. See you next time!

# WHAT IS GOOD FOR MY TEETH?

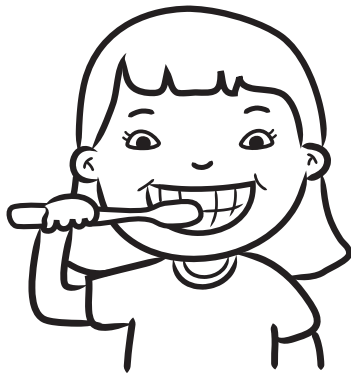
Color or circle the pictures of things that help keep your smile healthy.



DENTIST



SOFT DRINK



FLUORIDE TOOTHPASTE



## WHAT MAKES ME SMILE?

Draw a picture of something that makes you smile.





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# TINY SMILES

## BABY TEETH ARE IMPORTANT



### BIRTH to 1ST TOOTH (around 6 months)

*Your baby's first smile appears even before you see the first tooth—it's all about the gums at this stage.*

#### BEST SMILE TIP!

Gently wipe baby's gums with a clean, damp, soft washcloth or gauze after each feeding. This removes bacteria and bits of food.

#### HEALTHY HABITS

You can pass cavity-causing germs to your baby, so don't put their pacifier in your mouth to clean it. And don't share feeding spoons. To clean pacifiers, rinse them with water. Never dip pacifiers in sugar, honey, or other foods.



### 1ST TOOTH to 3 YEARS OLD

*Starting around 6 months until about 12 to 14 months, your baby's first tooth will push through the gums.*

#### BEST SMILE TIP!

Once your child's teeth begin to show, brush them two times a day (morning and night). Use a baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice. Start cleaning between teeth daily as soon as your child has two teeth that touch.

#### HEALTHY HABITS

Take your child to the dentist for a first checkup after the first tooth appears or by the time your child turns 1. Do not let your child sip drinks with sugar all day.



### 3 to 5 YEARS OLD

*By age 3, your child will have about 20 teeth. These baby teeth are important. They help your child eat, speak, and smile. They also hold space for permanent teeth.*

#### BEST SMILE TIP!

Brush your child's teeth for two minutes, two times a day. Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste on a child's toothbrush. Assist with brushing until your child can spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it, usually around age 6. Keep cleaning between their teeth daily, for example, with dental floss.

#### HEALTHY HABITS

Encourage your child to eat fruits, vegetables, and foods that are low in sugar. Limit snacks, candy, juice, soft drinks, and sticky treats. And remember, water with fluoride is the best drink for your child's teeth.



Keep smiles strong at every age and every stage. Find a dentist, download brushing calendars, and get more advice for tiny teeth at [MouthHealthy.org](http://MouthHealthy.org).

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# TINY SMILES

**Baby teeth are important.** They help your child chew, speak, and smile. They also help permanent teeth grow in the correct position. Did you know that children can get cavities as soon as their teeth first appear? Nearly one in four children ages 2–5 has cavities in their baby teeth.<sup>1</sup> Cavities can hurt. Cavities also can cause children to have problems eating, speaking, learning, playing, and sleeping. Children learn healthy habits from their parents and caregivers. Read below to find out how you can help prevent cavities and promote healthy habits.

## HELP PREVENT CAVITIES

### DURING PREGNANCY



- ▶ Children's teeth begin to develop between the third and sixth months of pregnancy. To help baby teeth develop correctly, be sure to get plenty of nutrients and eat a balanced diet. For tips on how to eat a balanced diet, visit [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov).

▶ It is important to go to the dentist during pregnancy. Also, remember to brush your teeth two times a day for two minutes, clean between teeth, and drink water with fluoride to help keep your own teeth and gums healthy and strong.

### BIRTH to 1ST TOOTH (around 6 months)



- ▶ Gently wipe baby's gums with a clean, damp, soft washcloth or gauze after each feeding.
- ▶ Breastfeed your baby for at least the first six months of life, if possible. To help prevent tooth decay, fill your baby's bottle only with formula or milk. Finish bottle feedings before putting your baby to bed.

▶ You can pass cavity-causing germs to your child, so don't put your baby's pacifier in your mouth to clean it. And don't share feeding spoons. Rinse pacifiers with water to clean them.

▶ Don't dip pacifiers in sugar, honey, or other foods.

### 1ST TOOTH to 3 YEARS OLD



- ▶ Take your child to the dentist for a first checkup after the first tooth appears or by the time your child turns 1.

▶ Brush your child's teeth two times a day (morning and night). Use a baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice. Start cleaning between teeth daily as soon as your child has two teeth that touch.

- ▶ Protect your child's teeth with fluoride. Talk to your dentist or pediatrician about your child's fluoride needs.
- ▶ Sippy cups should be used only until around your child's first birthday. Do not let your child sip drinks with sugar all day.

### 3 to 5 YEARS OLD



- ▶ Brush your child's teeth for two minutes, two times a day. Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste and a small, soft toothbrush. Take turns—brush your child's teeth one time and then have them do it the next time. Supervise brushing until your child can spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it, around age 6.

▶ Clean between their teeth daily—for example, with dental floss.

▶ Encourage your child to eat fruits, vegetables, and foods that are low in sugar and to drink fluoridated water. Limit snacks, candy, juice, soft drinks, and sticky treats.

▶ Ask your child's dentist or doctor about putting fluoride varnish on your child's teeth to prevent cavities.

Visit [MouthHealthy.org](http://MouthHealthy.org) for more tips from the American Dental Association to help your child have their best smile!

<sup>1</sup> Dye BA, Thornton-Evans G, Li X, Iafolla TJ. Dental caries and sealant prevalence in children and adolescents in the United States, 2011–2012. NCHS data brief, no 191. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2015. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db191.pdf>

