

TAKE HOME TIPS

1. Children may cry when you brush their teeth. Children may cry when you change their diaper. You are not hurting them - you are helping them.
2. Children do not have the manual dexterity to brush their teeth on their own until they can at least tie their own shoes.
3. Cavities are multi-factorial. A cavity is a bacterial infection - not just a hole in the tooth. Regular dental visits and risk assessments can help reduce the chance of your child getting a cavity.
4. Fluoride is naturally occurring ion, and when used properly and in moderation, is a very safe and effective way to reduce cavities.
5. Limit snacking and “grazing” - every time your child eats it can lead to an acid attack on the teeth and increase chance for cavities.
6. Sugar is everywhere - yogurt, raisins, packaged snacks - *even “organic” and “all-natural” can be high in sugar.* The American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends no fruit juice for children under 1 year and no more than 4-6 ounces of juice per day in toddlers and children 4-6 years of age. Juice is not a substitute for fresh fruit and vegetables, which provides fiber and contain less sugar and calories than juice. The key is to reduce the length of time and frequency teeth are exposed to sugars. Natural sugars (glucose, sucrose and fructose) and carbohydrates are broken down into sugars that can make cavities. Best is to avoid juice or only give one cup a day at a meal time and then brush after. Lots of water in between meals is great for the teeth and body!
7. Make tooth brushing time an enjoyable ritual at least twice a day, one of those times should be at bedtime. Be creative and have fun with your child while they brush their teeth. Sing a song, play a game or use a toothbrushing app or video. **Turn over the page for more details.**

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STRATEGIES TO GET YOUR CHILD TO BRUSH

1. **Sing a song.** Make up your own song or adapt a favorite tune, changing the lyrics to goofy ones about brushing or flossing.
 - a. Example: Instead of “row, row, row your boat” change it to “brush, brush, brush your teeth”. Change the song every few days or take requests!
2. **Make it a game.** Have your kids use their imagination!
 - a. If they love superheroes they can battle villains named “cavity bugs.”
 - b. Pretend to guess everything your child ate that day based on what you “find” in the teeth.
 - c. Get creative and “find” things hiding in their mouth/teeth.
3. **Try an app or a video.** The *Disney Magic Timer app* by Oral B and *Sesame Street: Healthy Teeth, Healthy Me: Brushy Brush*-a video starring Elmo are popular options. There are many other free apps in the app store as well.
4. **Get real.** Show your child a cartoon of germs digging cavities in teeth to help them understand the importance of brushing and flossing. Then you can give them a “mission” to brush and floss away the germs.

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