



# Mouth Care for the 3 to 6 Year Old

## Healthy children need healthy teeth

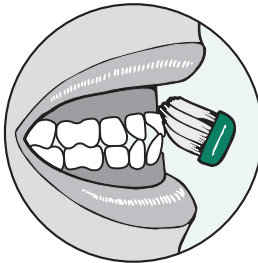
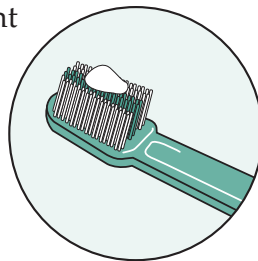
By the age of 3, most children will have all 20 baby teeth. Some baby teeth do not fall out until about age 12. Healthy baby teeth lead to healthy adult teeth.

### Adults still need to brush their children's teeth

3 to 6 year olds are too young to do a good job.

## Mouth Care

- Brush the teeth two times a day.
- Use a small, soft toothbrush.
- Use a pea sized amount of **fluoride** toothpaste to make teeth stronger and prevent tooth decay.
- Pull the lip and cheek aside with a clean finger to see better.
- Brush where the teeth and gums meet.
- Use small back and forth movements.
- Brush the inside, the outside, and the top of the teeth.



Visit a dental professional to learn when to start flossing and to get more information on mouth care.

## Tips for brushing teeth

- Be a good role model. Children need to see adults brush and floss daily.
- Make brushing part of a daily routine.
- Let children choose a favourite small, soft toothbrush to use.
- Find a flavour of **fluoride** toothpaste that your child likes.
- Sing a song, tell a story or play music while brushing.
- Praise your child for letting you brush for them.
- Let children practice brushing on their own but always have an adult finish brushing.

**Brushing children's teeth is not always easy, but it is always worth the effort!**



*Sit behind your child to keep them stable when brushing. This helps you to see the teeth well.*

## Healthy eating habits for healthy teeth

- Offer children 3 meals and 2 to 3 planned healthy snacks a day.
- Follow Canada's Food Guide [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide).
- At this age children should be using a regular cup only.
- Offer only water between meals and snacks.

Sipping drinks and eating all day long may cause tooth decay.

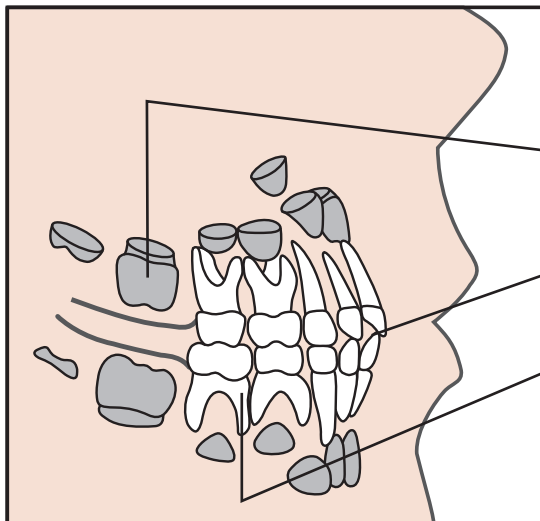


### Dental check-ups

- Take your child to see the dentist by 12 months.
- Regular dental check-ups can help prevent tooth decay.
- To find a dentist see [www.bcdental.org](http://www.bcdental.org) or check the phone directory.

### Dental sealants

- Dental sealants are coatings placed in the grooves of the back teeth to prevent tooth decay.
- Ask your dentist about dental sealants for your child.



### Permanent (adult) teeth start to come in soon.

- Permanent first molars come in around age 6 before baby molars fall out.
- Some children lose their first baby tooth around age 5 or 6.
- Some baby molars do not fall out until about age 12.

**Problems with baby teeth may lead to problems with adult teeth.**

Other fact sheets on parenting your child are available at your local Community Health Office/Centre or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>.

### For more information, contact:

- HealthLink BC - Dial 8-1-1. Translation services are available in 130 languages. [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)
- or the Public Health Dental Program or a Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health. [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)

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