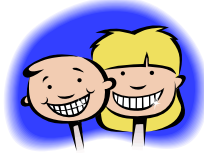


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Children's Oral Health: Tips for Parents

Children start losing their baby teeth at around 6 years of age. The last teeth to fall out are usually the baby molars (back teeth) at around 12 years of age. It is important to keep baby teeth healthy because children need them for:



- Speech development
- Chewing food and getting proper nutrition
- Spacing for permanent teeth
- Smiling and self-esteem

Children need your help to keep their teeth healthy. Here's how you can help:

- Brush and floss your children's teeth until they can handwrite their name (around 8 years of age).
- Use a small amount of fluoride toothpaste twice a day. Nighttime brushing is especially important.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks. Encourage your children to drink water when they are thirsty.
- Provide healthy snacks. (See snacking & sipping tips below).
- Start regular dental check-ups and cleanings by age one (twice yearly).
- Have sealants applied to erupting permanent molars.
- Be a role model for your child and establish good oral hygiene and eating habits for yourself.



Snacking and Sipping Tips:

Snacks are an important part of a child's food intake, and not just a "treat" between meals. Beware that frequent nibbling or sipping on foods and drinks that are high in sugar increases a child's risk for cavities. There are many factors involved in tooth decay, including how often food and sugary drinks are consumed and how long it stays on the teeth. Children who eat healthy snacks and drink fewer sugary drinks have more energy and will learn better. Choose healthy snacks for your children and save "treats" for special occasions after meals.



For a healthy snack, choose foods from at least 2 of the 4 food groups in "Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating." Limit the number of snacks to 2 to 3 per day to avoid nibbling and sipping all day. Change the snacks often to provide variety and keep children interested in healthy foods. Offer water to sip on between meals to keep hydrated. Refer to Sip Smart! BC www.bcpeds.ca for sugar content in popular drinks.

Snack Suggestions:

- Pieces of fruit and yogurt for dip.
- Pieces of raw vegetables and hummus dip.
- Cut up pieces of pita bread or whole grain bagel and hummus dip.
- Hard-boiled egg and slices of cheese.

Establishing good oral hygiene habits at an early age will ensure your child has healthier teeth and a healthier body for a lifetime!

Source: BC Dental Hygienists' Association www.bcdha.ca

For more information, please visit www.vch.ca/dentalhealth or call **Carole Charbonneau**, Community Dental Hygienist for Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore at (604) 904-6200.