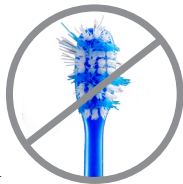


## Toothbrush tips

- Choose the right toothbrush for your child's age.
- Choose a toothbrush with soft bristles.
- Replace a toothbrush when bristles wear out (two to three months).



Time for a new toothbrush!

## Toothpaste tips

### Baby to age 3

- Clean your baby's mouth with a cloth or soft toothbrush during the first year.
- As teeth begin to break through the gums, use a smear of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- It is best to clean the teeth after breakfast and before bedtime.



### Age 3 and older

- Increase the amount of fluoride toothpaste to a pea-sized amount.
- Brush twice a day for at least two minutes.



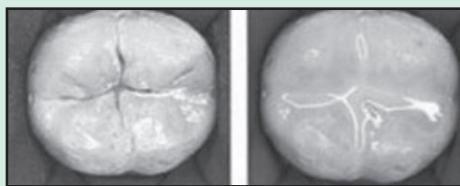
### All ages

- You need to help your child brush their teeth until they are at least 7 or 8 years old.
- Teach your child to spit out toothpaste and not swallow it after brushing.

## Dental sealants

Your child will usually have their first set of permanent molar teeth (back teeth) in first and second grades (two on the top and two on the bottom). The second set of permanent back teeth usually comes in around sixth and seventh grades.

Dental sealants are a coating that flows into the deep pits and grooves of the back teeth. Sealants "seal out" bacteria and food that cause cavities. Sealants help protect the back teeth from cavities. Your child should get dental sealants from your dentist or a school dental sealant program.



**Before:**  
Pits and grooves

**After:**  
with sealant

Dental sealants only protect the back teeth. It is very important your child keeps brushing twice a day, flossing each day and using fluoride either at home or at school.

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact the Oral Health Unit at 971-673-0348, or email [oral.health@state.or.us](mailto:oral.health@state.or.us). We accept all relay calls or you can dial 711.

OHA 8770 (11/2017)

# Keeping Your Child's Mouth Healthy



A healthy mouth is an important part of overall health. Good oral health starts with keeping your child's teeth cavity-free.

**Oregon Health**  
Authority  
PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION  
Oral Health Unit

## What is a cavity?

A cavity is a hole in the tooth. When bacteria (germs) mix with sugar left on a tooth, it creates acid. This acid weakens the tooth and eventually causes a hole in the tooth — a cavity. Cavities can be very painful if not treated.

## Tips for a healthy smile

- See a dentist regularly
- Brush teeth for at least two minutes, two times a day
- Floss teeth daily
- Use fluoride
  - » Toothpaste
  - » Fluoride varnish
  - » Fluoridated water
- Have dental sealants applied
- Choose healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables and cheese
- Drink water, low-fat milk and milk products (soy milk)
- Wear a mouth guard while playing sports

## See the dentist regularly

Take your child to the dentist by age one. Continue to take your child for regular visits. Most dentists will want to see your child twice a year. An oral health screening at school does not replace the need for regular visits to the dentist.

## Fluoride

Fluoride is a mineral that helps make teeth stronger so teeth do not get cavities. There are many ways your child can get the right amount of fluoride to protect their teeth.

You can find out if your tap water has fluoride in it by calling your water service. If your child does not get fluoride that way, your doctor or dentist may want your child to get fluoride another way:

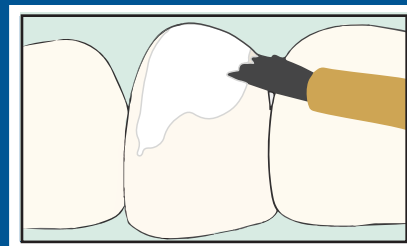
- Drinking bottled water with fluoride
- Fluoride toothpaste
- Fluoride varnish (see below)
- Fluoride tablets, drops or mouth rinse
- Fluoride foams or gels

## Fluoride varnish

Fluoride varnish helps protect against cavities. It is a safe coating of fluoride painted onto the teeth. The fluoride soaks into the teeth. The coating on the outside is off by the next day.

Your child can get fluoride varnish from your dentist, doctor or school oral health program. It works best if your child has two to four treatments per year.

Fluoride  
varnish  
coating



## Floss once a day

It is important to floss at least once a day. Food and germs stick between the teeth where the toothbrush cannot reach. This leads to cavities.

## How to floss

1. Take out about 18 inches of dental floss from a floss dispenser.
2. Wrap the ends of the floss around your middle fingers.
3. Guide the floss with your index finger around each tooth in a “C” shape.
4. Gently scrape the floss up and down against the side of each tooth. Be sure to floss under the gum line to remove food and bacteria.
5. Unroll a new section of floss as you move from tooth to tooth.
6. Floss all teeth, even the back teeth.

## Flossing steps

