

Why children's teeth are important

Primary (baby) teeth are important for eating, speaking and smiling. They also have an important purpose of maintaining the space needed for the following permanent (adult) teeth.

If a primary tooth is lost early, the teeth behind can drift forward and take up the space needed for the underlying permanent tooth. This will result in teeth crowding and possible need for orthodontic treatment. Early loss of a number of primary teeth can also result in speech problems and the tongue can get into the bad habit of protruding into the space.

Teething

Children's teeth begin to erupt into the mouth at about 6 months of age and by around 3 years of age they should have all 20 teeth. This is the ideal age at which to have their first dental visit. During teething children's gums can be sore or tender which can be relieved by using a cold teething ring. A non-aspirin based teething gel may also provide some relief.

Cleaning

Children's teeth form plaque on them as soon as they appear in the mouth. Thus, brushing should begin from that point on. Children as young as 2 or 3 can begin to brush their own teeth. It is good for them to watch their parents and by imitating them they can begin good brushing habits. While children do like to be independent it is important for the adult to follow up with a thorough brushing at least twice a day. Children don't have the skills to use a toothbrush correctly until about 8 years old.

When cleaning their teeth stand behind the child and tip their head back gently and cradle it on one arm. Use a small toothbrush with soft bristles and no toothpaste initially. Then introduce a smear (pea size) of toothpaste at around 12 months of age. Use a children's toothpastes as they have a mild taste and contain less fluoride (children up to the age of 4 usually swallow the toothpaste so use only small amounts). Electric toothbrushes are the most effective toothbrush and can be used on children as young as 3.

Thumb sucking

Thumb and finger sucking is a perfectly natural reflex for babies but if continued to the age of 5 or 6 it can have major dental ramifications.

It can affect the development of the jaws and positioning of the teeth causing "buck teeth". Discuss this with us at Cannon Hill Dental as we may be able to give you some helpful suggestions to help stop the habit.

Bottles

Severe decay can result in children who are put to sleep with a bottle containing milk (even breast milk), formula, fruit juice or any sweetened liquids. The sugars stay around the teeth for hours as no saliva is produced during sleep to wash them away. This results in acid being produced which causes extensive decay. Only water should be given in a bottle when children are going to bed.

Diet

Dental decay is caused by acids from bacteria repeatedly attacking and dissolving the protective enamel covering on a tooth. These acids are produced by the bacteria from sugars found in our diet. The longer there are sugars in the mouth, the longer the acid is produced. So try to limit the number of exposures to sweet foods to reduce tooth decay risk. Remember, it is the frequency of sugar consumed, as well as the amount of sugar consumed which is important.

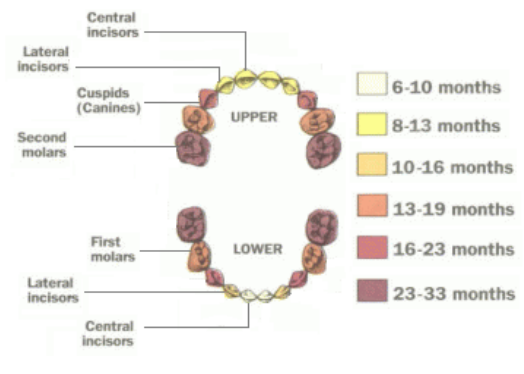
Fluoride

Fluoride helps to protect teeth from decay and create tooth structure which is stronger and more acid resistant. Brisbane now has a fluoridated water system which means fluoride supplements such as fluoride tablets are no longer recommended. In accordance with the Australian Dental Association guidelines, we recommend introducing a low fluoride children's toothpaste at 18 months of age. Children 6 years and over should use a standard fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

Eruption times

Some parents become concerned if their children's teeth don't come through in the normal order or schedule. Children's teeth vary greatly in their tooth eruption patterns and invariably such worries are usually unfounded. However, please feel free to raise any questions you have at your regular visits to Cannon Hill Dental to put your mind at rest.

Primary Teeth Eruption Timetable



Secondary Teeth Eruption Timetable



A closer look at tooth eruption

