



**LET'S STOP THE ROT**  
Join The Fight Against **Tooth Decay**



## Teaching Your Child to Clean Their Teeth

Even though baby teeth fall out and are replaced, any decay at this stage can still affect the development of your child's permanent teeth.

To give them the best chance of avoiding tooth decay, read the 'How to Brush' and 'How to Floss' guides so you're familiar with the right techniques and then follow these five simple tips.

### Start cleaning teeth early – babies and toddlers

As soon as the first tooth appears start by wiping with a clean, damp cloth every day. When more teeth come through, switch to a small, soft toothbrush – but no toothpaste. You can sit your child on your knee, facing away from you, supporting their head with your arm.

Begin using toothpaste with fluoride when your child is 2 years old. You can use a fluoride toothpaste earlier if your child's doctor or dentist recommends it.

### Supervise brushing

Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone. This could be around age six or possibly a little earlier. When they start brushing let them do their own teeth then brush their teeth straight afterwards to make sure they didn't miss anything, particularly along the gum line.

### Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste

We need fluoride to fight cavities but if children under six swallow too much toothpaste it can cause white spots on their permanent teeth. To avoid this, use only a small amount of toothpaste (about the size of a pea). Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste and to rinse well after brushing. You can get milder, low fluoride toothpastes for kids under six.

### Introduce flossing

Once any two of your child's teeth touch each other, it's time to start flossing. The tiny gaps between teeth that a toothbrush can't reach make a perfect hiding place for food particles and bacteria. Try and do this once a day.

### If they don't like brushing...

If it's proving difficult to teach your child how to clean their teeth, ask your Dentist to show them, at their next check-up. There are also things you can do at home to make teeth cleaning more fun for kids.

- Allow your child to brush your teeth first, then, get them to try their own and finish off by brushing their teeth for them to make sure they didn't miss anything.
- Talk to them while you're brushing, telling them what you're going to do next.
- If they're reluctant to let you brush, get them to roar like a lion and open their mouth really wide so you can reach the back teeth. For the front teeth, they can pretend to growl like a tiger.
- Get your child to brush their favourite doll or teddy bear's teeth before you brush theirs
- To make sure your child brushes for long enough, brush along to a favourite song
- Invent some 'nasties' for your child to get rid of – fight 'plaque monsters' or hunt for 'molar mutants' to get them to brush all the hard to reach areas and protect their teeth

## Professional Resources

For more information on oral health and looking after your mouth, visit [www.dentalhealthweek.com.au](http://www.dentalhealthweek.com.au)

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