

Be a role model for your children

Establish good oral health habits from the beginning.

You'll always remember your child's first smile.

As your children start getting teeth, teaching them good oral care becomes very important. Dental decay is one of the most common chronic infectious diseases among U.S. children and it's **preventable!**¹

Brushing and flossing are important habits.⁴

In the beginning, your child will need your hands-on help to learn how to care for teeth and gums. Ideally, a parent will brush and floss a child's teeth until the child is at least 6 years old. But by age 6 or 7, your child should be able to brush his or her own teeth twice a day – with supervision until about age 10 or 11 — to make sure they are doing a thorough job. Flossing, also an essential habit, is a task that demands more manual dexterity than very young children have. Children are not usually able to floss well until they are age 10 or 11, and even then they should be supervised.

Preventive dentistry begins with the first tooth.

A healthy mouth and teeth are important parts of a healthy body, and teaching good oral health habits from an early age can have lifelong implications. It is much easier to teach a young child good habits than it is to break an older child of bad ones. That's why encouraging good oral health habits early on can be so powerful.

Take your child to visit their dentist when the first tooth comes in. Your child's dentist will teach you how to protect your child's dental health. The earlier that first dental visit, the better the chance of preventing dental disease and helping your child belong to the cavity-free generation.³

Serve as a good role model by practicing good oral health care habits yourself.



Simple ways you can help your child maintain good oral health

- **Establish good oral health habits early** by using toothpaste when your child is 12 months old. However, only use a pea-sized portion on the brush and press it into the bristles so your child won't eat it. Later, when the gaps between your child's teeth close, it's important to start flossing.
- **Schedule regular dental visits** for family checkups, periodontal evaluations, and cleanings.
- **Check your child's mouth** for the signs of periodontal disease, including bleeding gums, swollen and bright red gums, gums that are receding away from the teeth, and bad breath.

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it's time to feel better



¹ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. November 2001. ² The American Academy of Periodontology, April 2001. ³ American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, 2001. ⁴ American Dental Association "Smile Smarts" Curriculum. "CIGNA Dental" refers to the following operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation: Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. and its operating subsidiaries and affiliates. This document is provided by CIGNA solely for informational purposes to promote consumer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. CIGNA assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations. 04/09 ©2009 CIGNA