

## Baby teeth are important

Most children have some baby teeth until they are about 12 years old, the first baby tooth will fall out at about six years of age (usually the lower front tooth). Baby teeth hold space for adult teeth so that they grow into the right position. They also help your child develop good speech, eat healthy foods and support self-esteem. Learning to brush and floss early helps keep teeth healthy.

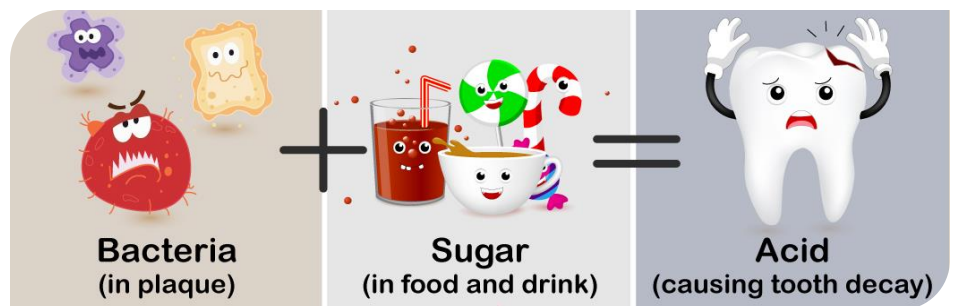
Baby teeth that have cavities may need dental care. Without treatment a child may have pain, infection and even lose their teeth early.

## What is dental plaque?

Plaque, a sticky layer made up of bacteria and food, is always forming on teeth. When it's left on teeth, plaque changes the sugar in food and drinks to acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel and causes cavities. Plaque can also cause gum disease and can lead to bad breath.



*Remove plaque from teeth by brushing and flossing well every day.*



## Teeth brushing tips for children

- Brush teeth twice a day, morning and night for two minutes each time, using a soft toothbrush.
- The best time to brush teeth at night is just before bedtime.
- Help your child brush their teeth until they are about eight years old.
- Teach your child to brush their teeth in a regular pattern so they won't miss a spot. Brush the inside, outside and chewing surfaces of all teeth, as well as the tongue.

## What about toothpaste?

- Use toothpaste with fluoride. Children who can spit out need a pea-sized amount of toothpaste, younger children need an amount about the size of a grain of rice.
- Put the right amount of toothpaste on your child's toothbrush yourself until they are about six years old.
- Children should spit out leftover toothpaste and not rinse.



## Tips for a Healthy Mouth

- Offer your child healthy snacks, including fruit, vegetables, whole grains, cheese and yogurt. Offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks a day.
- Offer water and milk every day, and drink only water between meals and snacks. Avoid giving sugary foods and drinks to your child.
- Protect your child's teeth with fluoride and sealants.
- Have your child wear a mouth guard when playing sports. Mouth guards protect teeth, lips and cheeks. They may also reduce concussions and jaw fractures from sports-related injuries.
- Have your child visit a dental professional regularly.
- Be a role model and take good care of your teeth — your child is watching you!

## Flossing

- Flossing removes plaque and food from between the teeth where a toothbrush can't reach.
- Help floss your young child's teeth. Children can begin to floss their own teeth at about the age of 10, but you may still need to help.
- You can make flossing easier for young children by using a flosser.

## Preventing cavities

### **Fluoride**

Most municipal water in Simcoe Muskoka does not contain fluoride, which protects teeth against tooth decay. Children in communities without fluoride or who are at risks for cavities should have fluoride professionally applied to their teeth.

### **Sealants**

Sealants are a coating that are applied by a dental professional to the pits and grooves of your child's adult molar teeth. They help prevent cavities.

If your child qualifies, fluoride and sealants can be applied by a dental professional at your child's school or the health unit, free of charge.



## Free dental care

The health unit provides free dental screening for children. Your child may be eligible for free dental care through the **Healthy Smiles Ontario program**, which offers care for children age 17 and under.

For more information, or to book a dental screening appointment, call  
705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8804