

YOUR CHILD'S TEETH



*Lesson Material on Care of
the Preschool Child
No. 3*



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What are good teeth?

A child who has good teeth has a complete, whole set; none are missing, and none are decayed. When his mouth is closed in a natural manner the chewing surfaces should fit easily together. The enamel or outer covering of the teeth should be white, clean, and smooth. When your child is 4 or 5 years old there should be slight spaces between his baby teeth, especially in front, so that there will be plenty of room into which the second teeth can grow.

How is strong enamel made and kept?

The enamel of the teeth is a very hard substance containing lime. This lime is obtained from certain foods that contain a large amount of lime, or calcium; among these are especially cow's milk, green vegetables such as spinach and celery, fresh fruits such as oranges, and whole-grain cereals such as oatmeal and whole-wheat flour.

The first set of 20 teeth are inside the jaw at birth, and their crowns have almost the full coat of enamel. By the time the first tooth appears the enamel has been formed on these temporary teeth. As your baby's teeth were begun during the 18 months when you were his main source of food, your diet while you were pregnant and while you were nursing him should have included a considerable quantity of the calcium-containing foods. When he was weaned he should have had milk, cereals, green vegetables, and fresh-fruit juices. He needed calcium to make strong enamel during the formation of the second teeth. Remember that your child will have only these two sets of teeth; after the second set has grown a tooth that is destroyed is gone forever.

Why must good care be taken of the first teeth?

When your child is 3 years old he probably will have 20 teeth. Some of them must serve him until his sixth or seventh year, when he begins to get his permanent teeth. Others remain until he is 10 or 12 years old, at which time the permanent teeth usually have all come in. This is an excellent reason for taking good care of his temporary teeth.

What makes teeth decay?

The main cause of tooth decay is a poorly developed and poorly nourished condition of the enamel, due to the lack of calcium-containing foods. Other causes are diseased gums, the presence of other decayed teeth, failure to wash the teeth regularly, frequently, and thoroughly, and the use of gritty or too strong cleansing powders or pastes.

How can you take good care of your child's teeth?

Good care of teeth includes cleanliness, preventive care, and dental care.

The baby's first teeth should have been wiped gently each day with a clean piece of cloth. When there were enough teeth to brush a soft baby toothbrush dipped in salt water should have been used. When the child is old enough to learn how to brush his teeth you should help him to get the habit of regular and thorough brushing.

An important item in preventive care is that you must not allow sucking of thumbs and fingers. Continued thumb sucking may push the front upper teeth out and the lower ones in from the pressure of sucking. The result may be that the upper and lower teeth do not meet evenly, and the wearing off of enamel from friction may cause decay.

To have adequate dental care you should take your child to the dentist about every five or six months while the new teeth are coming in. This gives the dentist a chance to see how things are going; he will notice early tooth troubles and do what he can to prevent them from growing worse.

Problems.

1. Does your child have an orange and 1½ pints of milk to drink every day, spinach three times a week, and a cooked whole-grain cereal for breakfast every morning, summer and winter?
2. Does your child use his toothbrush night and morning so systematically that he has the habit and would no more think of not brushing his teeth than he would of going to bed with his shoes on?
3. Does your child know how to brush his teeth away back to the farthest corner, "up and down and round and round"?
4. Which tooth is called the six-year molar, and why is its care very important?
5. Have you let your child become afraid to go to the dentist? If so, how can you help him to overcome his fear?

References.

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