



SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN ORAL CARE

Parents play a big role in the healthy development of their children's teeth and overall oral health. One of the best ways to keep your child's smile healthy for life is to start good oral health habits early.

Children lose their primary teeth from age 6 or 7 until they are about 12 years old. It's okay for children to wiggle their primary teeth if they are loose. But it's not okay to use force to pull out a tooth that's not ready to come out. When a tooth comes out at the right time, there should be very little bleeding.

Between 6 to 13 years of age, all the permanent teeth will erupt except for the wisdom teeth (known as third molars). The first permanent or adult teeth to erupt are the "first molars" or "6-year molars." They come in at the back of the mouth, behind the last primary teeth. These do not replace any primary teeth.

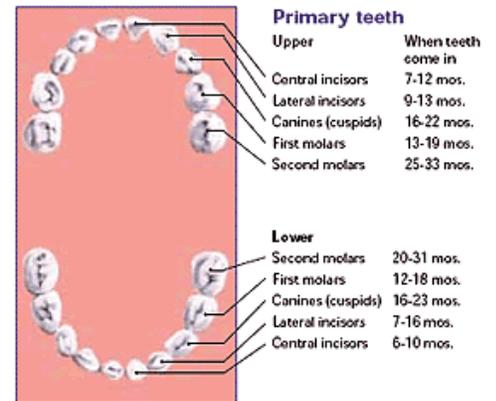
Sometimes, a permanent tooth will erupt before the primary tooth has fallen out. Your dentist may advise extracting the primary tooth to make sure there is space for the new permanent tooth to come in, or to avoid a permanent tooth from erupting in the wrong place.

Each child develops at his or her own pace. If you have questions about the development of your child's teeth, speak with your child's dentist.

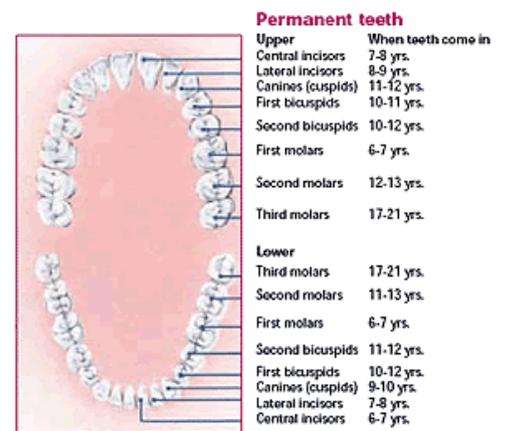
Permanent teeth often look more yellow than primary teeth. This is normal. But it could also be caused by a medicine your child took, by an accident that hurt a primary tooth or by too much fluoride. If you or your child are concerned, ask the dentist.

A REGULAR ORAL CARE ROUTINE FOR CHILDREN

A good regular oral care routine is to brush at least twice daily and floss once a day. Brushing and flossing before bed is an important step in your child's oral health routine. If you don't get rid of the germs (bacteria) and sugars that cause cavities, they have all night to attack the teeth. Children are usually ready to do a good job brushing on their own when they are about 7 years of age.



Primary Teeth



Permanent Teeth

TOOTHBRUSHES AND TOOTHPASTE

- A soft-bristled toothbrush is recommended and it should be the right size for your child's mouth.
- Replace the toothbrush at least every 3 or 4 months. Children can be hard on toothbrushes. If the bristles get bent or worn down, they will not do a good job, and may hurt your child's gums.
- Use fluoridated toothpaste. For children over 3 years of age, use only a bit of toothpaste, about the size of a garden pea.

TEACHING SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN HOW TO BRUSH

- Have your child wash his or her hands before brushing.
- Have your child brush at a 45-degree angle to the teeth. Starting with the bristles at the base of the tooth where the gums and teeth meet, have your child move the brush to the top of the tooth, using a gentle circular motion.
- Teach your child not to scrub. Your child can hurt the gums by brushing too hard.
- Have your child clean every surface of every tooth. This means the cheek side, the tongue side and the chewing surface of each tooth. For the inside of the front teeth, your child can use the tip of the brush.
- At this age, your child may not reach right to the back of the mouth to clean the molars and may need assistance from an adult.
- A good brushing should take 2 to 3 minutes.
- Have your child brush the tongue.
- Once finished, spit out the toothpaste.

TEACHING SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN HOW TO FLOSS

The ideal age to teach children how to floss is when they are 7 or 8 years of age. Here's how:

- Have your child wash his or her hands before flossing.
- Take a piece of floss about as long as your child's arm. Show your child how to wrap it around the middle fingers, leaving a few inches between your child's hands.
- Show your child how to hold the floss tightly between the thumb and index finger.
- Using the thumb and index finger, have your child gently guide the floss between the teeth to the gum line. Teach your child to wrap the floss into a "C" shape around the base of the tooth.
- Have your child wipe the tooth from bottom to top 2 or 3 times using a gentle rubbing motion. Teach your child not to push too hard to get the floss between the teeth. This can snap the floss into the gums and hurt them.
- Teach your child to floss both sides of each tooth. Don't forget the backs of the last molars.
- Show your child how to move to a new part of the floss for each new tooth.

TROUBLES FLOSSING?

If your child is having problems handling the floss, a loop of floss may be easier. Take about 12 inches (30 cm) of floss and tie a knot to make a circle or a loop that the child can hold between thumb and index finger. Use the same method for flossing as described above. Your child can also use floss sticks, or floss holders, which may be easier to use when he or she first learns to floss. Your child's dentist may have other suggestions as well.

HEALTHY GUMS

Although tooth decay is the main oral health problem affecting children they can also get gum disease. Daily brushing and flossing can stop gum disease. If your child's gums bleed, don't stop brushing. If the gums are always swollen, sore or bleeding, take your child to the dentist.

