

# Oral Hygiene: How to Care for Your Child's Teeth



**By: Kiara Smith**

## **Abstract**

Maintaining good oral hygiene for your child is crucial for their overall health and well-being. By establishing healthy dental habits early, you can prevent cavities, gum disease, and other oral health issues. This guide offers practical tips on brushing, flossing, and diet choices that support strong, healthy teeth. It also highlights the importance of regular dental check-ups and how to make oral care a fun, positive experience for your child. Protect their smile today with simple yet effective oral hygiene practices that will benefit them for years to come.



## **1. Introduction**

Oral hygiene is an essential aspect of your child's overall health that should not be overlooked. From the moment their first tooth appears, it's important to start taking care of their teeth to set the foundation for a lifetime of good dental health. Proper oral care helps prevent issues such as tooth decay, cavities, and gum disease, which can affect not only their smile but their confidence and well-being. In this guide, we'll explore simple and effective ways to care for your child's teeth, ensuring that they develop healthy habits that will protect their smile as they grow.

## **2. Teach children about personal hygiene**

### **What is personal hygiene for children?**

Your child needs to keep themselves clean to remain healthy and to feel good about themselves. Good personal hygiene will help boost their self-esteem and confidence.



### **Teaching your child good hygiene habits**

We all need to keep clean to avoid harmful germs and avoid getting sick. Good personal hygiene also boosts confidence by dealing with problems like bad breath or body odour.

For children, the basics of good personal hygiene are:

- washing their hands
- covering their mouth when they cough
- having regular baths or showers
- brushing and flossing their teeth

You may have to help your child learn and practise good personal hygiene habits. These will become even more important as they grow older and approach puberty.

Being able to talk openly and honestly about keeping clean is important. This will help you manage more difficult personal hygiene issues that are likely to come up when they are teenagers.

### **Washing hands**

Most germs are spread through hand contact. Regularly washing hands will prevent your child and others from getting sick.

Encourage your child to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds:

- when their hands look dirty

- before eating or making food
- after touching raw meats, including chicken and beef
- after touching any body fluids like blood, urine (wee) or vomit (sick)
- after touching animals (including cats and dogs)
- after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing
- after going to the toilet

### **Showering and bathing**

Children need regular baths or showers. You can include a bath or shower at the end of the day as part of their bedtime routine. Your child's hair should be washed 1 to 2 times a week. If their hair is very oily, it might need washing more often.

Make sure your child washes all of their body, including:

- under their arms
- their genital area
- their anal area
- between their toes

Make sure that their body is thoroughly dry before they get dressed.

### **Brushing teeth**

Children should brush and floss their teeth twice a day (in the morning and before they go to sleep).

They should brush with a pea-sized amount of children's toothpaste that contains fluoride. You will need to help your child brush their teeth until they are about 7 years old.

### **Clothes and shoes**

Doing the laundry uses significant quantities of water, energy, and chemicals. It is also the most demanding stage of clothing's life cycle. This use of resources needs to be balanced with the need for children to wear clean clothes. That is clothes that are not obviously dirty and don't smell.

Socks and underwear should be changed when dirty and at least every day.

Once your child starts school, they can hang up their uniform to air at the end of each day.

### **3. Teach Kids to Brush Their Teeth**



Teaching your child to brush his or her teeth is very important. Regular and thorough brushing is essential for preventing tooth decay, gum disease, tooth loss, and even bad breath. While good habits and proper techniques are essential, when it comes to teaching kids how to brush, try to make the whole task fun and not a chore!

#### **Making a Habit of Healthy Teeth**

Start early. Start cleaning your child's gums even before he or she has any teeth.[1] It will help keep his/her mouth and gums healthy and it sets a pattern of oral care for both of you.

Practice what you preach. You will have many other opportunities to use the "Do as I say, not as I do" method of parenting. Practice good oral health care yourself in Gold Coast and let your child know this is important for everyone.

Visit the dentist. It is recommended that a child visit the dentist by age 1 or within 6 months of the first tooth appearance, whichever comes first.

Make it a part of the daily routine. Have your child brush his/her teeth at the same times each day. Attach it to other normal tasks -- for instance, brushing right before pajamas come

off in the morning and as soon as they go on in the evening. Make it seem very ordinary (yet important).

### **Teaching the Right Way to Brush**

Remember “2min2x.” The accepted goal for tooth-brushing, for both children and adults, is 2 times daily for 2 minutes each time.

Use toothpaste properly. A rice grain sized amount of toothpaste is recommended for children under 3, and a pea-sized amount for kids ages 3-6. While you should emphasize the need to spit out toothpaste, swallowing this small amount is harmless.

Teach proper brushing technique. Show them how to start the brush at a 45-degree angle against the gum line, then clean the front (and back) of each tooth with short, round strokes. Brush the biting/chewing surface of each tooth with short, sweeping strokes.

Let your kid take over when ready. Most kids love to show how “big” they are by trying to do things all by themselves. When you feel comfortable putting the brush in your child’s hands, do so but supervise carefully. Hold your hand over his/hers to start if that helps.

Be patient. Yes, your child will likely squeeze toothpaste everywhere and make a big mess repeatedly. Focus on instilling the right habits and demonstrating the right techniques, and allow time for your child to develop the skill and dedication to brush correctly and regularly. Really, it’s just like anything else you try to teach a child -- patience is a virtue!

### **Making Brushing Fun**



Let them choose supplies. Store shelves are full of kids' toothbrushes, toothpaste, rinse cups, etc., with princesses, race cars, and the like plastered on them. Take kids shopping and allow them to pick their favorites. If it helps them enjoy brushing a little more, a branded toothbrush is worth the extra cost versus a generic 1.

Use music. Sing or play a song that takes about 2 minutes so they know how long to brush. Songs made specifically for kids' tooth-brushing can be found online, and there are gadgets available that play music, blow bubbles, and do various other things to pass the 2 minutes. An old-fashioned egg timer works in a pinch as well.

Play games. Most kids like a good competition, and especially winning, and most especially besting Mom or Dad. Take their minds off the drudgery of brushing.

Utilize online resources. There are numerous websites dedicated to helping kids brush better, and they often offer games, video clips, printable charts to keep track of tooth-brushing, and other resources. Some of them make use of favorite kids' characters as well.

Reward their efforts. Let's face it, kids like being rewarded. And the promise of the reward of a lifetime of healthy teeth probably won't cut it. Some call it bribery, but most parents end up calling it a necessity.

#### **4. Establishing Good Dental Habits For Your Children**



When should children start brushing teeth independently, and how can you be sure they are doing a good job? originally appeared on Quora: the place to gain and share knowledge, empowering people to learn from others and better understand the world.

Establishing healthy oral habits right from the beginning will allow for the proper development of their permanent teeth. Before their first tooth appears, remove any food particles and bacteria by gently wiping their gums with a washcloth. Once teeth grow in, begin brushing with a toothbrush twice a day with a small amount of toothpaste no larger than a grain of rice. I recommend using a toothbrush with soft bristles like those in the MAM Learn to Brush Set. The Learn to Brush Set comes with a training brush and baby's brush to grow with your baby. The training brush has an extra-long handle that allows parents and babies to hold the brush together. As they continue to practice together, this will help children learn to brush their own teeth. The baby's brush has a shorter handle to help babies practice on their own. To make brushing teeth seem less like a chore, MAM also developed an app that brings the playful character, Brushy the Bear, on their toothbrushes to life through stories, songs, and a timer.

In general, the kind of dexterity kids need to brush their teeth properly is the same kind they need to tie laces. So, while kids won't have full autonomy until around age 10, most can start brushing their teeth reasonably well at five or six. Starting at any age, you can have kids put a toothbrush in their mouth independently and play with it to gain the feel for it, but ultimately we want to be brushing for them. When kids get to ages four, five and six, you can transition to more of a supervised brushing where kids are brushing their teeth on their own, parents are watching and then giving it a once over to make sure it was done thoroughly.

MAM is a brand that I trust and highly recommend to my patients as well as each product is designed in collaboration with a robust network of over 30 medical and technological experts to ensure best-in-class safety testing and requirements. MAM has also had zero products recalls in the history of the brand, which showcases their dedication to safety and innovation.

## **5. Common Oral Health Problems in Children**

There are a number of problems that affect the oral health of children Gold Coast, including tooth decay, thumb sucking, tongue thrusting, lip sucking, and early tooth loss. Even though baby teeth are eventually replaced with permanent teeth, keeping baby teeth healthy is important to a child's overall health and well-being.





### **Baby Bottle Tooth Decay**

Baby bottle tooth decay (also called early childhood caries, nursing caries, and nursing bottle syndrome) happens when a baby's teeth are in frequent contact with sugars from drinks, such as fruit juices, milk, formula, fruit juice diluted with water, sugar water, or any other sweet drink. If breastfed infants fall asleep with unswallowed milk in their mouth, they are also at risk for tooth decay. Bacteria in the mouth feed on the sugars, causing tooth decay.

If left untreated, decayed teeth can cause pain and make it difficult to chew and eat. Also, baby teeth serve as "space savers" for adult teeth. If baby teeth are damaged or destroyed, they can't help guide permanent teeth into their proper position, possibly resulting in crowded or crooked permanent teeth. Badly decayed baby teeth could lead to an abscessed tooth, with the possibility of infection spreading elsewhere in the body.

### **How Do I Prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?**

Some tips to prevent baby bottle tooth decay include:

- During the day, to calm or comfort your baby, don't give a bottle filled with sugary drinks or milk; instead, give plain water or a pacifier.
- Never dip your baby's pacifier in sugar, honey, or any sugary liquid.
- Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle filled with sugary drinks (watered-down fruit juice or milk still increases the risk of decay). Give a small amount of plain water or use a pacifier instead. Too much water is harmful to a baby.
- If your baby is nursing at night, make sure you remove your breast from your baby's mouth when they fall asleep.

- Don't add sugar to your baby's food.
- Use a wet cloth or gauze to wipe your baby's teeth and gums after each feeding. This helps remove any bacteria-forming plaque and sugar that have built up on the teeth and gums.
- Ask your dentist about your baby's fluoride needs. If your drinking water is not fluoridated, fluoride supplements or fluoride treatments may be needed.
- Teach your baby to drink from a cup by their first birthday. Moving to a "sippy cup" lowers the teeth's exposure to sugars, but constant sipping from the cup can still result in decay unless it is filled with plain water.

### **Thumb Sucking**



It's normal and healthy for infants Gold Coast to suck their thumbs, fingers, pacifiers, or toys. Object sucking gives children a sense of emotional security and comfort. But if thumb sucking continues beyond the age of 5, when the permanent teeth begin to come in, dental problems can occur.

Depending on the frequency, intensity, and duration of the sucking, the teeth can be pushed out of alignment, causing them to protrude and create an overbite. Your child may also have difficulty with the correct pronunciation of words. In addition, the upper and lower jaws can become misaligned and the roof of the mouth might become malformed.

## **Tips to Help Your Child Stop Thumb Sucking**

First, remember that thumb sucking is normal and should not be a concern unless the habit continues as the permanent teeth begin to emerge.

Children must make the decision on their own to stop sucking their thumb or fingers before the habit will cease. To help toward this goal, parents and family members can offer encouragement and positive reinforcement. Because thumb sucking is a security mechanism, negative reinforcement (such as scolding, nagging, or punishments) are generally ineffective; they make children defensive and drive them back to the habit. Instead, give praise or rewards for time successfully avoiding the habit. Gradually increase the time needed without sucking to achieve the reward. The younger the child, the more frequent the rewards will need to be given. For children who want to stop, cover the finger or thumb with a band-aid as a reminder. Take the thumb or finger out of the mouth after your child falls asleep.

To help older children break the habit, you should try to determine why your child is doing it: Find out what stresses your child faces and try to correct the situation. Once the problem is gone, your child often finds it is easier to give up sucking. If this doesn't work, there are dental appliances your child can wear in the mouth to prevent sucking. These appliances are cemented to the upper teeth, sit on the roof of the mouth, and make thumb sucking harder and less pleasurable.

## **Tongue Thrusting**



Tongue thrusting is the habit of sealing the mouth for swallowing by thrusting the top of the tongue forward against the lips.

Just like thumb sucking, tongue thrusting exerts pressure against the front teeth, pushing them out of alignment, which causes them to protrude, creating an overbite, and possibly interfering with proper speech development.

If you notice symptoms of tongue thrusting, consult a speech pathologist. This person can develop a treatment plan that helps your child to increase the strength of the chewing muscles and develop a new swallowing pattern.

### **Lip Sucking**

Lip sucking involves repeatedly holding the lower lip beneath the upper front teeth. Sucking of the lower lip may occur by itself or in combination with thumb sucking. This practice results in an overbite and the same kinds of problems as with thumb sucking and tongue thrusting. Stopping the habit involves the same steps as for stopping thumb sucking.

### **Early Tooth Loss**



Premature loss of a child's baby teeth typically occurs from tooth decay, injury, or lack of jaw space.

If teeth are lost before the permanent teeth come in, the nearby teeth can tip or shift. When a permanent tooth tries to emerge into its space, there may not be enough room. The new tooth may emerge tilted. Crooked or misaligned teeth can cause a range of problems, from interfering with proper chewing to causing temporomandibular joint problems.

If your child loses a tooth prematurely, your dentist may recommend a space maintainer. A space maintainer is a plastic or metal device that holds open the space left by the missing tooth. Your dentist will remove it once the permanent teeth begin to erupt.

### **5.1. Bruxism (Teeth Grinding) In Children: Reasons And How To Treat It**



Bruxism or teeth grinding is prevalent in children when they are sleeping. It makes them unconsciously grind their teeth or clench them tightly. It can even happen during the day when they are feeling uneasy or apprehensive. Most children stop doing it as they grow older. However, if they are doing it excessively, the constant grinding can lead to erosion of the enamel and make teeth vulnerable to cavities.

Children are, in any case, susceptible to tooth decay because of their affinity towards candies, chocolates, potato chips, burgers, cold drinks, etc. The sticky, starchy and sugary foods are harmful to teeth. If an unhealthy diet Gold Coast is coupled with bruxism, the consequences can be negative.

Thus, parents must understand the reasons behind bruxism in children and how it can be treated. The information below will help you gain an insight into this problem and dealing with it.

### **1. Reasons behind Bruxism in Children**

Teeth grinding can occur for various reasons in children aged between 2 to 11 years. An expert dentist in Hope Island can help detect the cause of the problem through an examination. The most common ones include:

- Misaligned teeth
- Stress or anxiety

- Hyperactivity
- Teething pain or earache
- Cerebral Palsy

## 2. Problems Arising From Bruxism



Although bruxism while sleeping is an involuntary reaction and is quickly outgrown by children, it can lead to problems in some cases. These are listed below:

- Sleep disorder or waking up several times at night
- Lack of sleep leads to reduced focus and irritability
- Tooth sensitivity because of loss of enamel
- Cracked or flattened teeth due to grinding and clenching
- Headache and facial pain after waking up
- Pain in the jaw while opening and closing the mouth or eating

- Developing temporomandibular joint disorder (TMD)

### **3. Identifying Bruxism in Children**



It is vital to get the teeth of your children examined by reliable dentists in Hope Island regularly. They can determine the cause and extent of bruxism by:

- Checking for soreness in the jaw
- Identifying cracks on the tooth's surface or changes to its shape
- Looking for enamel erosion
- Ulcers in cheeks
- Swelling of the lower jaw
- Grinding noise at night is a common symptom that can be easily picked up by parents

### **4. Treatment for Teeth Grinding**

Children with mild bruxism are not required to undergo any treatment. However, if the problem is leading to pain and sleep disorder, it must be corrected by using the following methods:



- Hope Island dentists recommend using a mouth guard to protect teeth from the impact of grinding and clenching. It also helps to reduce pain in the jaw.
- If the constant grinding has affected the shape of the tooth, the dentist will use crowns to cover the cracked surface and prevent bacterial infection.
- Children showing symptoms of bruxism must be given counselling to reduce stress and anxiety that may originate from academic pressure or bullying at school.

### **5. Ways to Prevent Bruxism in Children**



Teeth grinding can last for up to four seconds and take place six times in sixty minutes. It can be prevented by helping children relax before bedtime. It can be achieved by following the tips below:

- Introduce your children to mindfulness meditation from a young age. Sit with them to help them calm down and let go of any negative thoughts that are making them overthink.
- A warm bath before bedtime can help them sleep comfortably and feel peaceful.
- Read positive stories with them and limit screen time for sleeping. They must put away all gadgets at least an hour before sleeping.

- Listen to calming and soothing music while putting them to sleep to release negative emotions.
- Talk to your children about things that are bothering them and affecting their mental health Gold Coast. Make sure they are not scared or anxious before going to sleep.
- If the grinding is happening because of misaligned teeth, the dentist will recommend braces or Invisalign to get them in shape.

## **6. Things to do When Diagnosed With Bruxism**

Children who have been diagnosed with bruxism must maintain a healthy lifestyle and follow the recommendations of dentists in Hope Island. These include:

- Use a cold compress for painful jaw muscles
- Stop eating hard foods that can increase jaw pain
- Keep your facial muscles relaxed and avoid clenching consciously
- Get the child enrolled in hobby classes to reduce stress
- Increase playtime that does not include competitive games
- Avoid chewing gums and candies
- Visit your dentist regularly and wear the mouth guard as prescribed
- Drink a lot of water before going to bed

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, taking care of your child's teeth from an early age is key to ensuring their long-term dental health Gold Coast. By teaching them the importance of brushing, flossing, and making healthy food choices, you can help prevent common oral health issues and set them on the path to a lifetime of strong, healthy smiles. Regular dental visits, combined with consistent at-home care, will ensure your child's teeth stay healthy and bright. Encouraging these habits now will not only protect their teeth but also instill confidence and a positive attitude toward oral hygiene for years to come.

## **References:**

Personal hygiene for children | Forbes, Retrieved 18 Oct 2023, from

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/personal-hygiene-for-children>

How to Teach Kids to Brush Their Teeth | Wiki How, Retrieved 18 Oct 2023, from

<https://www.wikihow.life/Teach-Kids-to-Brush-Their-Teeth>

Establishing Good Dental Habits For Your Children | Forbes, Retrieved 18 Oct 2023, from

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2023/04/20/establishing-good-dental-habits-for-your-children/>

Oral Health Problems in Children | Webmd, Retrieved 18 Oct 2023, from

<https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/oral-health-problems-children>

Bruxism (Teeth Grinding) In Children: Reasons And How To Treat It | Dentist Hope Island, Retrieved 18 Oct 2023, from

<https://www.dentisthopeisland.com.au/bruxism-teeth-grinding-in-children-reasons-and-how-to-treat-it/>