

# DENTAL HEALTH

## Plant The Seeds Of Good Oral Health

(NAPSA)—To keep your smile healthy, you should know that your oral health needs evolve with age. Cultivate strong teeth by planting the seeds for good oral health early and knowing what to watch for at different life stages.

### Babies and Toddlers

Baby teeth are susceptible to cavities and need daily upkeep from the beginning. Before the first tooth arrives, wipe your baby's gums with a soft, clean cloth after each feeding to get rid of unwanted bacteria. Once the first tooth does appear, brush with fluoride toothpaste and toothbrushes designed for babies and younger children. For children under 3 years old, use an amount of toothpaste no more than the size of a grain of rice and no more than a pea-sized amount for kids between 3 and 6 years old. Babies should also have their first dentist appointment six months after their first tooth or before age 1.

During these early years, it's crucial that children learn oral health routines that will keep their smiles healthy into adulthood. Teach your little one good habits early by demonstrating how to brush, reiterating the need to brush for two full minutes twice a day and making it fun.

### Children and Adolescents

Childhood and adolescence (ages 10–19) are the times to reinforce good habits and take steps to guard against common mouth issues. Supervise your child's brushing until age 8 and flossing until age 10. You can also talk with the dentist about preventive measures such as sealants to protect against cavities and mouth guards to protect from mouth injuries.

Dr. Fred Eichmiller, Vice President and Chief Science Officer for Delta Dental of Wisconsin, emphasizes the need for instilling oral health habits in children and adolescents. "The risk of cavities is highest in adolescents for multiple reasons, including the eruption of cavity-prone second molar teeth, dietary choices and oftentimes lack of personal oral health care," said Dr. Eichmiller. "Practices including brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing once daily, choosing healthy snacks, drinking fluoridated water and visiting the dentist regularly will help ensure the adolescent maintains a healthy smile."

In addition, pay attention to gum



**Smart dental practices—brushing, flossing and seeing the dentist—can help keep your smile healthy and happy all through your life.**

health as adolescence is often the time when gingivitis begins. Symptoms like gum redness, swelling, bleeding and tenderness can indicate the presence of gingivitis. Alert the dentist if any of these symptoms is present.

### Adults

As an adult, the wear and tear your teeth experience over time can become noticeable by causing such symptoms as discoloration, cavity susceptibility and tooth cracks or chips. Keep your teeth strong by maintaining a proper oral health routine that includes brushing and flossing daily, eating mouth-friendly foods and scheduling regular dental visits.

Avoid harmful substances. Tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption can put you at higher risk for oral cancer, which occurs most often after age 60. Take steps to prevent oral cancer and look out for early signs with home screenings. Mouth symptoms can include sores, red or white patches, persistent pain or numbness, lumps or rough spots, and issues with chewing and swallowing. If you experience any of these symptoms for longer than two weeks, speak to your dentist.

Another factor to consider is that the nerves in your teeth may grow less sensitive, making it less likely that you'll notice the development of cavities. Maintain regular checkups so your dentist can catch any mouth issues early before they progress.

Good oral health requires dedication, but by tending to your mouth with care, you can keep your smile healthy at any age.

### Learn More

For further facts and dental health tips, go to [www.deltadentalwi.com](http://www.deltadentalwi.com).