

Pointers for Parents

Four Ways To Protect Your Child's Smile For Life

(NAPSA)—The health benefits of practicing good dental habits span far beyond white, shiny teeth. Increasingly, studies have shown that there is a direct connection between oral health and overall health. Lack of good dental health practices can lead to gum disease, tooth decay and other often painful oral complications. Frequently, we hear about these effects in adults, but children's oral health is just as important—if not more so.

The U.S. Surgeon General reports that tooth decay is the most common chronic disease affecting American children, five times more common than asthma. Tooth decay greatly restricts children's daily activities and results in the loss of millions of hours of school each year.

There are four things that parents can do to emphasize good oral health care to children at an early age:

1. Set an example. Brush your teeth at least twice a day, use a between-teeth cleaning product such as GUM® Crayola™ Flossers and replace toothbrushes every three months. Make this routine a family affair.

2. Establish good oral health habits early. Positive dental care routines at a young age can help avoid the damaging effects of tooth decay and other oral health problems. Dentists recommend children brush for at least 60 seconds. In fact, it is important to start cleaning infants' teeth as soon as they get their first tooth.

3. Schedule regular dental visits. In addition to a balanced diet, brushing and flossing, it is important to schedule dental appointments for your children and your family at least twice a year. It is recommended that children visit a pediatric dentist when their first tooth comes in, usually between 6 and 12 months of age.

4. Check your child's mouth for the signs of periodontal disease. It is important to look



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out for bleeding gums, swollen and bright red gums, gums that are receding away from the teeth, and bad breath. Also, choose a brush that fits your child's mouth comfortably; ultrasoft bristles are recommended for protecting young gums.

"Starting oral health routines early will prevent the signs of and damage from tooth decay, including cavities," says Jackie Saunders, Registered Dental Hygienist. Parents may find this easier if they are armed with products that make teaching their children to brush their teeth a positive experience.

One such innovative product developed by Sunstar Americas is the GUM Crayola Timer Light Toothbrush. The brush flashes for 60 seconds to help teach kids to brush for the minimum recommended time, ensuring better oral health.

Recommended by dental hygienists, the toothbrush is said to increase brushing time with the help of its flashing light. Also, its unique soft bristles are easy on gums, and its suction cup base helps with easy storage and to keep bristles clean.

For more information on children's dental health and tips on developing good dental habits, visit GUMbrand.com.