



CHILDHOOD ORAL HEALTH

NOVA SCOTIA 2017 ORAL HEALTH REPORT



HEALTHY SMILES BEGIN EARLY AND AT HOME

Introducing good oral health habits early in life could mean Nova Scotia children will have better oral health, and better overall health, their whole lives. Early childhood caries (ECC), commonly known as cavities or tooth decay, is the most common childhood, infectious disease and is a big problem in Nova Scotia.

This often preventable condition can begin soon after the eruption of a baby's first tooth. It can cause significant pain and infection and disrupt eating, sleeping, proper growth, ability to socialize, concentrate and learn and compromise a child's overall health.

OVER
500

CHILDREN ARE CURRENTLY WAITING FOR CONSULTATION OR TREATMENT OF A DENTAL ISSUE AT THE IWK.

25 —
30%

OF ALL OR SURGICAL TIME AT THE IWK IS DEDICATED TO THE TREATMENT OF DENTAL DISEASE.

2.26
MILLION

SCHOOL DAYS ARE MISSED EACH YEAR DUE TO DENTAL RELATED ILLNESSES IN CANADA.

36%

OF CHILDREN IN NS HAVE CAVITIES BY THE AGE OF SIX.

WHAT CAN NOVA SCOTIANS DO?

Good oral health, especially for kids, is about prevention, consistency and care. Here's how dentists advise we can help children have a happy, healthy smile now and in the future:

Schedule preventative visits before age one

Set a good example: Guide and educate kids by brushing, flossing and visiting the dentist yourself

Minimize risks by introducing brushing, flossing and a healthy diet early

Help keep teeth safe during sports and play as children age

BABY TEETH: FIRST VISIT FIRST TOOTH

Tooth decay can begin with a baby's first tooth. It's key to start good habits early with a first dental office visit.

THE CANADIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDS CHILDREN VISIT A DENTIST BY 12 MONTHS OF AGE OR WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF ERUPTION OF THE FIRST TOOTH AND REGULARLY THEREAFTER

Every child's first visit should be positive and fun. It serves as a great opportunity to introduce good oral hygiene habits early and prevent dental problems before they develop.

WHY BABY TEETH ARE IMPORTANT

Between 24–36 months of age (three years), children usually have a complete set of 20 primary (baby) teeth, and they play an important role in a child's development. Here's why:

Eating and nutrition:

Chewing without pain is important and decayed baby teeth can lead to dietary deficiencies, malnourishment, low weight and decreased growth.

Stronger and straighter smiles for life:

Primary teeth are important for guiding adult teeth into place. If primary teeth are lost due to decay, the adult teeth can be crowded.

Future oral health:

Taking care of baby teeth establishes good oral health habits and make sure kids are experienced in caring for them, and ready to keep their adult teeth healthy for life.

FINDING A DENTIST AND THE FIRST VISIT

Establishing a dental home early plays a critical role in your child's present and future oral and overall health.

CHILDREN WHO HAVE THEIR FIRST PREVENTATIVE VISIT WITH A DENTIST

BEFORE AGE 2

ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE GOOD ORAL HEALTH FOR LIFE.

DENTAL RELATED COSTS FOR CHILDREN WHO VISIT A DENTIST BEFORE AGE 2 ARE ROUGHLY

HALF THE COSTS

FOR CHILDREN WHO WAIT UNTIL AGE 3 OR 4.

BRUSHING AND FLOSSING:

ARE NOVA SCOTIANS PAYING ENOUGH ATTENTION TO PROPER HOME CARE?

Establishing good oral hygiene habits (brushing and flossing) will help prevent your child from tooth decay and gum disease. Teeth should be flossed once a day and brushed at least twice a day and always before bedtime.

BEGIN USING AN INFANT TOOTHBRUSH WHEN THE FIRST TOOTH ARRIVES.

IF THERE'S NO SPACE BETWEEN THE TEETH, PARENTS SHOULD ASSIST THEIR CHILDREN WITH FLOSSING

BEFORE A CHILD HAS BABY TEETH, THE MOUTH AND GUMS SHOULD BE WIPED WITH A CLEAN, DAMP WASHCLOTH.

REMEMBER TO BOOK THEIR FIRST VISIT WITH A DENTIST!

TEACH HOW TO FLOSS ON THEIR OWN AS THEY CONTINUE TO AGE TO KEEP UP GOOD HABITS.

TIP:

It can be tough to brush and floss your little one's teeth but will be easier if it becomes a habit! Make it fun and part of the daily family routine. **Try brushing and flossing while watching television, listening to music or singing a favourite song.**

NUTRITION

What we eat and drink plays an important role in the health of our mouths.



Prevent tooth decay. **Fruits and vegetables contain fiber and water that help balance natural sugars and clean teeth.** Plus, they help create saliva that rinses away harmful acids and food particles.



Make healthy habits early. Fluoridated water is the most tooth-friendly beverage a child can drink. **Sugary drinks like pop, juice and sports drinks are the leading risk factor for tooth decay,** and drinking them as children usually leads to drinking them as adults.



Use the right tools. If using a soother, **use an age appropriate size and never dip it in sweets.** Start bottle weaning and introduce drinking from a cup at age 1.



Drink water. **Never put your baby to bed with a bottle or sippy cup of milk or any other liquid other than water.** Limit juice or other sweet drinks to no more than four ounces a day at meal time only.



Fresh is best. If available, **fresh fruit, vegetables, hard cheeses, unsweetened yogurt and nuts are all tooth friendly between meal snacks.** They contain important vitamins and nutrients that are not only good for the teeth but also for the whole body.



Sugar smart. Avoid between meal snacks that contain refined sugar and carbohydrates **such as cookies, cakes, teething biscuits, crackers, potato chips, gummies, fruit snacks and granola bars.** All children deserve a treat now and then so keep sweets to a dessert at mealtime or for a special occasion!

FLUORIDE

Whether it's in water or toothpaste, or applied during a dental visit, fluoride provides many dental benefits. It contributes to tooth formation and makes new teeth stronger, provides long-lasting protection to a child's teeth, and children are less likely to develop dental decay if they use fluoride.

Assess the risk of tooth decay in your child with a health professional like a dentist.

IF YOUR CHILD IS AT RISK OF DECAY

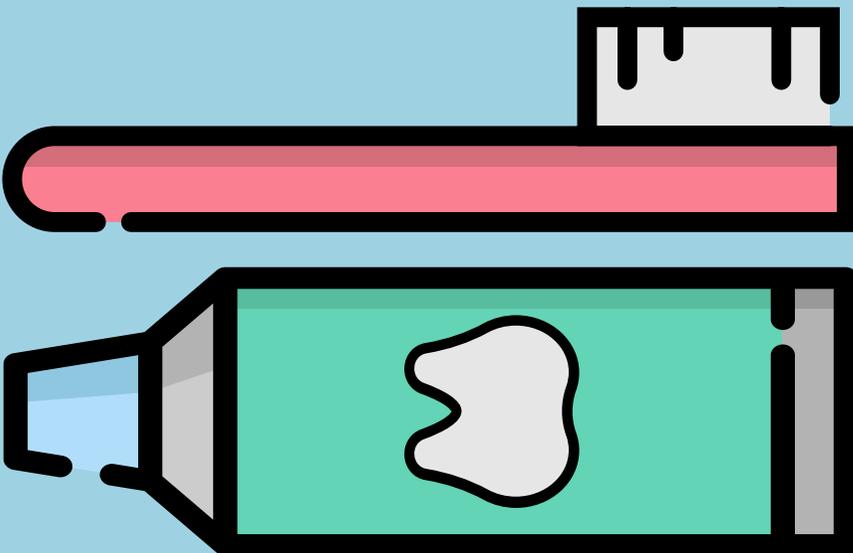
An adult should use a minimal amount of fluoridated toothpaste (the size of a grain of rice) when brushing their teeth from birth to age three.

IF YOUR CHILD ISN'T AT RISK OF DECAY

An adult should use a toothbrush moistened with water or a non-fluoridated toothpaste when brushing their teeth from birth to age three.

**WATER FLUORIDATION
CAN HELP REDUCE
DENTAL DECAY BY
20–40%**

From age three to six, the teeth should be brushed by an adult or supervised by an adult using a small amount (size of a green pea) of fluoridated toothpaste.



KEEPING TEETH SAFE: A PRIORITY FOR NOVA SCOTIA FAMILIES

Preventing dental injuries is just as important as good oral health habits, especially as children get older. Here are some tips dentistry advises to keep jaws, teeth and gums safe:

Be mindful of hard objects and surfaces that kids may fall into.

Look over your child's teeth and check for missing teeth, breaks, cracks or loose teeth.

While contact sports like hockey, soccer and football have a higher risk for injury, mouth guards should also be worn for activities like gymnastics, trampolining, biking, skating, skateboarding and martial arts.

**KIDS WHO PLAY
CONTACT SPORTS ARE**

60

**TIMES MORE LIKELY TO
EXPERIENCE A DENTAL
INJURY WITHOUT A
FITTED MOUTH GUARD.**

THERE ARE THREE BASIC TYPES OF MOUTH GUARDS:

STOCK MOUTH GUARDS:

are fairly inexpensive and come pre-formed and ready to wear. They are not fitted for your child's mouth, they are often bulky and can make breathing difficult while engaging in physical activity.

BOIL AND BITE MOUTH GUARDS:

are available at almost any sporting goods stores. They are softened by placing them in warm or hot water, they are a slightly better fit than stock mouth guards. This allows the mold to fit your child's bite but may not fully cover their teeth and gums.

CUSTOM-MADE MOUTH GUARDS:

are made especially for your child by their dentist. They offer the best possible fit—protecting them from a knocked-out tooth, badly bitten tongue or lips. Ask your dentist about getting their favourite colour or sports team added to their custom fitted mouth guard.

NSDA RECOMMENDATIONS



The government of Nova Scotia needs to act on fluoride—encouraging municipalities to **add fluoride to public water systems if it's not already there**, and preventing municipalities with fluoridated water from removing it. Fluoride is a major ally in fighting tooth decay.



Overall health **includes oral health**. When children enter their first year of school, parents or guardians are required to fill out a medical information form. **The government of Nova Scotia needs to include oral health information on that form** and ask necessary dental questions (i.e. whether they have a dentist, their name and contact in case of emergency and if a child has been seen for cavities).



Where fluoride is a cavity-fighter, **sugar promotes tooth decay**. Nova Scotia needs a sugar reduction strategy, particularly for school-aged children.



Mouth guards save teeth, it's really that simple. Nova Scotia's amateur sporting organizations need to be encouraged to adopt mouth guards as a requirement for all contact sports and activities where mouth injuries are a risk.



Good dental health starts early. **Nova Scotia needs to ensure prenatal education** for parents-to-be includes information to ensure babies are not experiencing the early childhood decay associated with bad habits, such as sugary sippy cups and nursing bottle decay.



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