

HEALTHY TEETH AND GUMS

It is important to take care of your child's mouth, teeth, and gums. A healthy mouth and teeth help a child's speech, eating, confidence, and overall health. Painful teeth can make it hard for a child to pay attention and learn at school. Very big cavities and tooth infections can cause dangerous illnesses

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay is damage from germs in your mouth that eat away at a tooth. This can cause a hole in the tooth, called a **cavity**.

Tooth decay and cavities can form if a child:

- Eats too many sweets or sticky foods
- Drinks too much soda or juice
- Does not brush his/her teeth
- Does not get regular cleanings by a dentist

Tooth decay is the most common childhood disease in the United States. The pain it causes may make it hard for your child to learn and focus in school. Your child may have trouble eating and could lose teeth as they get older.

Signs and Symptoms

A child should visit the dentist **two** times a year. The dentist will look at your child's teeth, gums and mouth for signs of tooth decay or cavities. A dentist may also recommend X-rays to see if there are any other problems.

If a dentist finds a cavity, they can repair it with a filling. A **filling** helps fix damaged teeth back to their normal function and shape. Fillings prevent cavities from returning or getting worse.

What can you do?

Make sure your child brushes their teeth for **two** minutes **twice** a day with toothpaste. A child should floss **one** time each day.

If your child says their tooth hurts, you should visit the dentist as soon as possible.