

Keeping Children's Mouth Healthy



Baby teeth are important

Baby teeth help your child eat, talk, and smile. They also hold space for adult teeth so that they grow into the right position. Developing good habits early help keep teeth healthy. Most children have baby teeth until they are about twelve years old. The first baby tooth will fall out at about six years of age (usually the lower front tooth).

How do cavities start?

Plaque, a sticky layer made up of bacteria and food, is always forming on teeth. When it's left on teeth, bacteria and sugar form an acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel and causes cavities.

If you think your child has cavities, please visit your dental provider or call the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit at 705-721-7520 or toll-free 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8804.

Cavities left untreated can lead to pain, infection and serious health problems. This can include: difficulty eating, sleeping, and learning.



Bacteria

in plaque

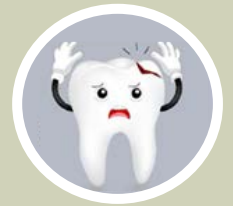
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Sugar

in food and drink

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Acid

causing cavities



How can you prevent cavities at home?

Toothbrushing

- Help your child brush their teeth at least two times daily for two minutes with a soft toothbrush, especially before bedtime. Do not forget their gums and tongue.
- Teach your child to brush their teeth in a regular pattern such as brushing the inside, outside and chewing surfaces of the teeth to avoid missed areas.
- Plaque left on teeth and gums can cause cavities, gingivitis, gum disease and bad breath.

Toothpaste

- Apply toothpaste with fluoride on your child's toothbrush. Use an amount the size of a grain of rice. If your child can spit, use a pea-sized amount. Do not swallow. Spit out leftover toothpaste. Do not rinse with water.



Flossing

- Floss your child's teeth daily. Flossing removes plaque and food from between the teeth where a toothbrush can't reach.
- There are tools available to help make flossing easier such as children's floss picks.

How else can you prevent cavities?

Visit your dental provider to talk about preventive treatments such as:

Fluoride

Fluoride is a natural mineral that helps keep teeth healthy and strong. Fluoride in water, toothpaste and at the dental office all work together to protect teeth and prevent cavities. Children in Simcoe Muskoka would benefit from regular fluoride varnish treatments as most of them do not have access to municipal water that contains fluoride.

Dental Sealants

Chewing surfaces of adult molars have pits and grooves that collect food and bacteria and are difficult to reach with a toothbrush. Sealants are a thin protective coating easily applied on new adult molars. They help prevent cavities by creating a smooth, easier to clean surface.

Tips for a Healthy Mouth



Make water your drink of choice.



Choose snacks that are nutritious, low in sugar and that don't stick to teeth. Refer to the Canada's Food Guide for healthy eating tips.



Wear a mouth guard when playing sports to protect jaw and mouth from injury.



Visit a dental professional regularly.



Be a role model, set up a routine and brush and floss as a team!



Services available at the health unit

Meet our dental team!

We offer **FREE** dental screenings to all children and youth aged 17 years and under. Screenings can identify dental issues and help families access government funded programs.

For more information, or to book a dental screening appointment, call **705-721-7520** or toll-free **1-877-721-7520 ext. 8804**

www.smdhu.org/dental

