Dental Care Checklist - Kids

Now that your kids are a little older and their permanent teeth are growing in, it's a great time to teach them good dental care habits.



- [ ] Teach your child how to brush and floss. -- By the time your child reaches the age of 6 he or she should have the coordination skills required to brush teeth. Teach your child proper tooth brushing techniques, which include short, up-and-down and back-and-forth strokes and brushing around their gum line. Teaching your child how to floss might be trickier, so you may want to buy floss picks to start off.
- [ ] Look into dental sealants. -- Ask your dentist whether your child should get dental sealants for added protection against tooth decay.
- [ ] Monitor fluoride use. -- Check to see if your community water supply is fluoridated. If not, ask your dentist about professional fluoride treatments for your child. Keep in mind that too much fluoride can cause dental fluorosis.
- [ ] Ask your dentist about mouthwash. -- Ask your dentist whether your child should use mouthwash and which types are safe for children. Generally speaking, your safest bet will be an alcohol-free mouthwash made especially for children. When teaching your child how to rinse with mouthwash, be sure to demonstrate how to rinse without swallowing
- [ ] Encourage healthy eating habits. -- A nutritious, well-balanced diet is just as important for your child's teeth as it is for overall health. Instead of cookies, potato chips and ice cream, give your kids smart snacks such as fresh fruit and vegetables, unsalted pretzels, plain yogurt, nuts and low-fat cheese.
- [ ] Schedule an orthodontic evaluation. -- Your orthodontist may recommend that your children receive a complete orthodontic evaluation by the age of 7.
- [ ] Bad Bite or Crooked Teeth -- When your child's permanent teeth grow in look out for crooked teeth bite problems such as an overbite, underbite or crossbite.
- [ ] Prolonged Thumb-Sucking -- Thumb-sucking is a fairly common and generally benign habit among young children. However, if your child is still thumb sucking after the age of 5, speech and bite problems may start to develop. You can play an active role in helping your child break a thumb-sucking habit by establishing a reward system: Place stickers or gold stars on a calendar for each day your child doesn't suck his or her thumb and have a bigger reward after a certain period of time.

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