



**Fall for Smiles® to Keep
Mouths Happy and Healthy!**

Among parents with school-aged children, 17 percent say that their child has missed at least one day of school due to dental related pain or illness¹ – the most common chronic childhood disease in America.² In fact, tooth decay (cavities) affects one fifth (21.1 percent) of children 6–11 years of age, over half (59 percent) of children 12 to 19 years of age, and over 90 percent of adults 20 years and over.³

But when it comes to healthy mouths, there is a reason to smile. Tooth decay really is preventable, beginning with daily care and education at home. Sixty-eight percent of parents say teaching children to brush and floss twice daily is among the most important health care concerns for their children.⁴ While we recognize that teaching a child to take proper care of his or her teeth is no easy task, Oral Health America has some simple ideas and suggestions to share with your kids to help keep their teeth and mouth happy and healthy.

Brush

Brushing teeth may be the most important thing you can do to ensure a healthy smile. Remind children to brush their teeth at least twice a day for two minutes each time, using less than a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.

With younger children, use a child-size soft-bristle toothbrush, and brush the front, back, inner and outer surfaces and tops of their teeth, as well as their tongue, with short, gentle, back-and-forth motions. Then let them practice brushing.

Keep an eye on older children to make sure they are reaching all of their tooth surfaces, as well as gently brushing along the gum line. Children with braces need to spend extra time on hard-to-reach spots!

Eat

Nutritious foods are an important part of keeping children's smiles healthy and their teeth strong. Foods such as fruits, vegetables and cheese help build strong muscles and bones in their bodies and also help build strong healthy teeth and gums. Try chewing a sugar free gum, like Trident, after meals to help fight cavities.

¹ Oral Health America Public Opinion Survey sponsored by Oral Healthcare Can't Wait and Plackers, 2011.

² Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General, May 2000.

³ Dye et al. (2007)

⁴ Oral Health America Public Opinion Survey, 2011

Floss

Have children gently floss once a day to remove food that can get stuck between their teeth and sticky plaque that forms on their teeth. Brushing alone cannot reach all of the surfaces on a tooth—and flossing is very important in maintaining healthy gums, which provide vital support for each tooth. How do you make flossing simple for children? Use helpful tools like Plackers Kids Flossers to make flossing fun and easy to remember!

Avoid

Avoid soda, juice, and sticky and sugary foods. Bacteria that live in our mouths love these sugary substances and turn them into acids that cause tooth decay. When kids do have a special treat, make sure they brush and floss afterwards.

Sharing spoons, cups, straws, and cleaning pacifiers by mouth can also cause bacteria to be passed on from parent or caregiver to child. Do not put a child to bed with a bottle!

Routine

The more you help kids incorporate healthy dental care habits in their everyday life, the more likely they will initiate self-care on their own as they grow. Parents should set a great example by taking care of their own mouths, too. Remember—you are your child's biggest role model and influence.

Oral Health America encourages daily dental care as part of back to school and fall routines because there's no better time to start than right now. How will your family Fall for Smiles this season?

Find more information at www.oralhealthamerica.org/fallforsmiles.