

**strong**  
*teeth*  
**strong**  
*body*  
**strong**  
*mind*

*a teaching guide for*

# Oral Health Care in 0-5 year olds

## Benefits of healthy teeth



*Healthy baby teeth*

- Children who have less pain from cavities and infection are happier and sleep better.
- Children are less likely to have illness linked to oral infections.
- Children are able to eat a wide range of healthy foods.

## Indigenous oral health

Indigenous children often experience very poor oral health and as many as 50% have advanced decay by the time they are 5 years old. The Kimberley Dental team has found that up to 75% of primary school children in remote East Kimberley Aboriginal communities have widespread decay requiring treatment urgently or within 6 months. This is similar to the rates reported by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

## Cleaning teeth

- Teeth should be cleaned thoroughly at least once a day, but twice is best.
- Effective cleaning should take 2-3 minutes.
- Babies and small children need help to brush properly.
- Brush gently along the gums and teeth; on the inside, the outside and along the chewing surfaces of all teeth.
- Soft toothbrushes are best and should be replaced every 3 months.
- For children over 18 months use a small amount of fluoride toothpaste. If no toothpaste is available and for children under 18 months just use water.
- Toothpaste should be spat out – not swallowed or rinsed off.

## Tooth decay

Bacteria in the mouth join with the sugars in food and drinks to make acids that can eat into teeth causing decay.

Decay in teeth (cavities) does not get better on its own and can lead to infection and pain. The dentist or therapist can repair small cavities by removing decay and placing a filling but, if the cavity is very large or there is too much infection the tooth will need to be extracted.

Very young children with extensive decay can be difficult to treat and often need a general anaesthetic.



*Decay in baby teeth*

## Gum disease

As well as causing decay, bacteria can make the gums inflamed, with redness and bleeding. Daily gentle brushing can help make gums strong and healthy again.

## Good tucker

Growing kids need healthy food and drinks to grow strong bones and teeth *and* a strong heart, body and mind.

Local food like fruit and vegetables and bush tucker is best for everyone.

Plain water is best to drink and can also be used to rinse out after eating and drinking sweet food.

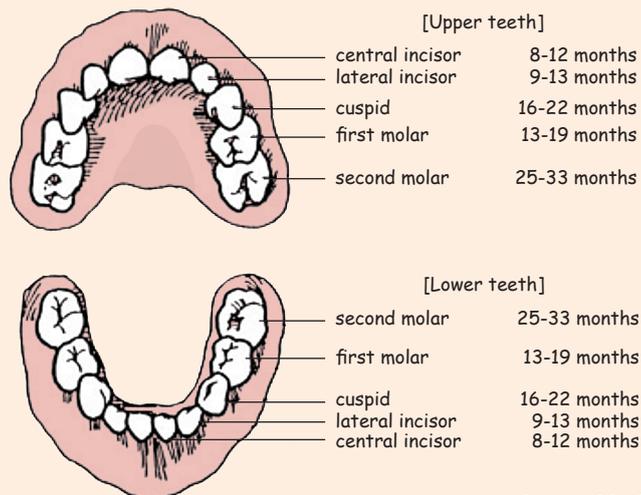


## Strong teeth for mothers and babies

Babies' teeth are being formed before they are born. If pregnant women eat healthy, nutritious food their baby's teeth will be stronger.

There are 20 baby teeth and they need to last until children are 12 years old. It is important to clean baby's teeth with a soft cloth or toothbrush from the time they first appear.

Breast milk is the best food for babies. Sugary foods and drinks can cause decay in baby teeth, only water or milk should be given in a baby bottle.



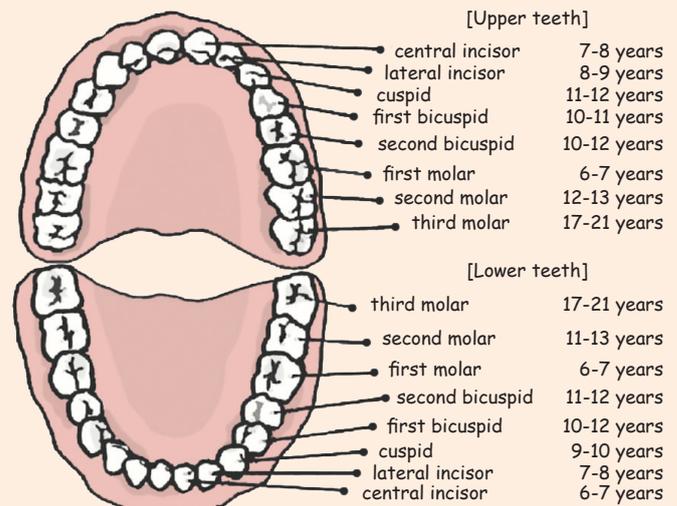
*Approximate eruption dates of baby teeth. The buds of baby teeth are forming during pregnancy.*

## Strong teeth for kids

Baby teeth start to become loose and fall out when children are about 6 years old. Baby teeth continue to fall out for a few years and permanent teeth gradually appear between the ages of 7 and 13.

Infections in baby teeth can affect permanent teeth before they appear so it is important to look after baby teeth as well. Baby teeth also guide the development and positioning of permanent teeth.

Permanent teeth need to last for a person's whole life, so it is important to keep teeth clean and gums healthy.



*Approximate eruption dates of adult teeth.*



## Storing toothbrushes



Each child should have their own toothbrush with their name on it.

Store them somewhere so they don't touch each other (spreads germs).



## Oral health education

### Do

- Provide toothbrushes and information about oral health\*.
- Implement a brushing program if feasible, regular brushing is shown to reduce decay rates. See storage suggestions above.
- Remind parents that breast milk is best and that only milk and water should be given to babies in bottles.
- Look in the children's mouths for signs of decalcification (white spots on teeth), decay (darker spots or holes) and swollen gums. Compare

to the other side. Children may not complain of dental pain because they have it all the time.

- Explain that areas of decalcification and even small dark spots of decay may be slowed by regular brushing with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Help parents access affordable treatment for their children.
- Help parents to access toothbrushes and toothpaste. Ideally provide a pack\*.

### Don't

- Blame people if their children already have decay – they need support, education and access to treatment to help them maintain good oral health.

\* To access stock of toothbrushes and toothpaste, contact the Kimberley Dental Team, Kimberley Population Health Unit or Dental Health Services (DHS: 08 9313 0604/5). Educational material: [www.dental.wa.gov.au](http://www.dental.wa.gov.au)