



# Caring For Your Child's Teeth

## Infants

- The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends cleaning your child's gums starting at birth using a soft cloth and water.
- Once you see your child's first tooth, begin to use a soft infant toothbrush with no more than a rice sized amount of fluoride toothpaste or water.
- To prevent tooth decay, brush your infant's teeth before bedtime to clean off the sugars from formula, breast-milk, or foods.
- After your child has their first tooth or reaches their first birthday, schedule a dental appointment.

## Pacifiers, Thumb, and Finger Sucking

- Thumb and finger sucking can begin in the womb. Sucking for infants provides a sense of comfort.
- Pacifiers are often used as a way to calm children, but should never be dipped in sugary foods or drinks.
- Most children between the ages of two and four naturally stop sucking on their thumbs, fingers, or pacifiers.
- Long-term use of a pacifier, thumb, or finger sucking can affect the shape of the mouth and position of the teeth.
- Talk to your dentist, pediatrician, or other healthcare professional about strategies to help your child stop.

## Toddlers

- The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends brushing your child's teeth twice per day after breakfast and before bedtime.

- Starting at the age of two, you can increase the amount of toothpaste to pea-size.
- Fluoride in toothpaste helps to prevent tooth decay. It should, however, be kept out of your child's reach and you should put it on his toothbrush to prevent him from swallowing too much.
- Your child's dentist will recommend how often your child needs to be seen based on their oral health. Typically, checkups every six months is recommended.