

# Tips to Grow By™

A publication of Akron Children's Hospital



## Dental Health

Proper dental care begins before a baby's first tooth appears. Just because you can't see the teeth doesn't mean they aren't there.

Even babies can develop tooth decay if good habits aren't practiced. Putting a baby to sleep with a bottle might be convenient, but can harm the baby's teeth. When the sugars from juice or milk remain on a baby's teeth for hours, they can eat away at the enamel, creating a condition known as **bottle mouth**. Pocked, pitted or discolored front teeth are signs of bottle mouth. Severe cases result in cavities and the need to pull all of the front teeth until the permanent ones grow in.

### Pediatric dentists

Pediatric dentists are trained to handle the wide range of issues associated with kids' dental health. They also know when to refer you to a different type of specialist, such as an orthodontist to correct an overbite or an oral surgeon for jaw realignment.

A pediatric dentist's primary goals are prevention (heading off potential problems before they occur) and maintenance (using routine checkups and proper daily care to keep teeth and gums healthy).

### Preventing cavities

The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that a child's first visit to the dentist take place by the first birthday. Such visits can help in the early detection of potential problems and help kids become used to visiting the dentist so they'll have less fear about going as they grow older.

If a child seems to be at risk for cavities or other problems, the dentist may start applying topical fluoride even before all teeth come in. Fluoride hardens the tooth enamel and helps ward off the most common childhood oral disease — dental cavities (also called dental caries).

**Cavities** occur when bacteria and food left on the teeth after eating are not brushed away. Acid collects on a tooth, softening its enamel until a hole or cavity forms.

Regular use of fluoride toughens the enamel, making it more difficult for acid to penetrate. Although many towns require tap water to be fluoridated, others don't. If your water supply is not fluoridated or if your family uses purified water, ask your dentist about fluoride supplements.

Discoloration can occur from prolonged use of antibiotics and some children's medications that contain a large amount of sugar. Parents should encourage kids to brush after they take their medicine, particularly if the prescription will be used for a long time.

Brushing at least twice a day and routine flossing will help maintain a healthy mouth. Kids as young as age 2 or 3 can begin to use toothpaste when brushing, under supervision. Kids should not use a lot of toothpaste, a pea-sized amount for toddlers is just right. Parents should always make sure that kids spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing.

As your child's permanent teeth grow in, the dentist can help seal out decay by applying a thin wash of resin to the back teeth, where most chewing occurs. Known as a sealant, this protective coating keeps bacteria from settling in the hard-to-reach crevices of the molars.

If you are prone to tooth decay or gum disease, your kids may be at higher risk as well. Be sure to call your dentist if your child complains of tooth pain, which could be a sign of a cavity that needs treatment.

### Orthodontia

As kids grow older, their bite and the straightness of their teeth can become an issue. Orthodontic treatment begins as young as age 7.

Dentists know that manipulation of teeth at a younger age can be easier and more effective in the long run. Younger children's teeth can be positioned with relatively minor orthodontia, thus preventing major orthodontia later on.

In rare instances, usually when a more complicated dental procedure is to be performed, a dentist will recommend general anesthesia be used. Parents should make sure that the professional who administers the medicine is a trained anesthesiologist or oral surgeon before agreeing to the procedure.

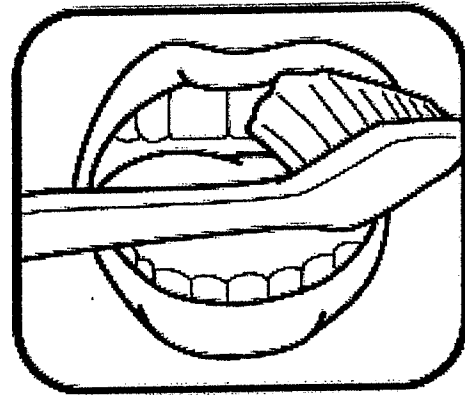
Don't be afraid to question the dentist. Giving your child an early start on checkups and good dental hygiene is an effective way to help prevent this kind of extensive dental work. Encouraging kids to use a mouthguard during sports also can prevent serious dental injuries.

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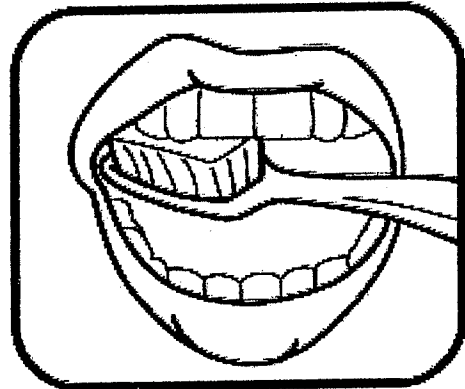
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# How to Brush

- Place the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the gums.

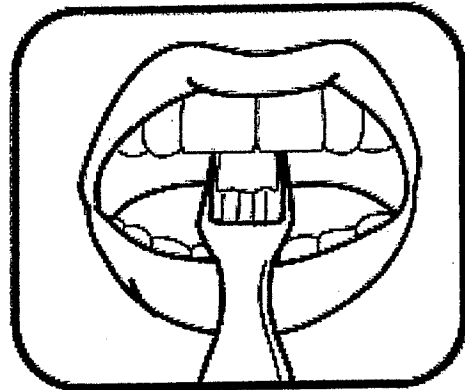


- Move the brush back and forth gently in short strokes.

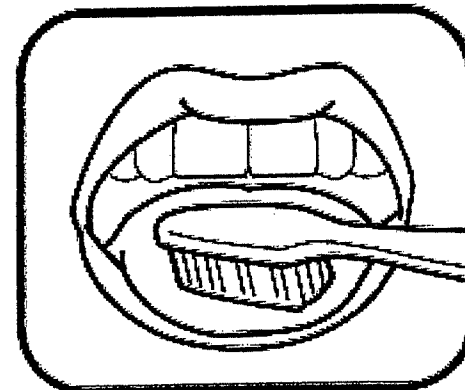


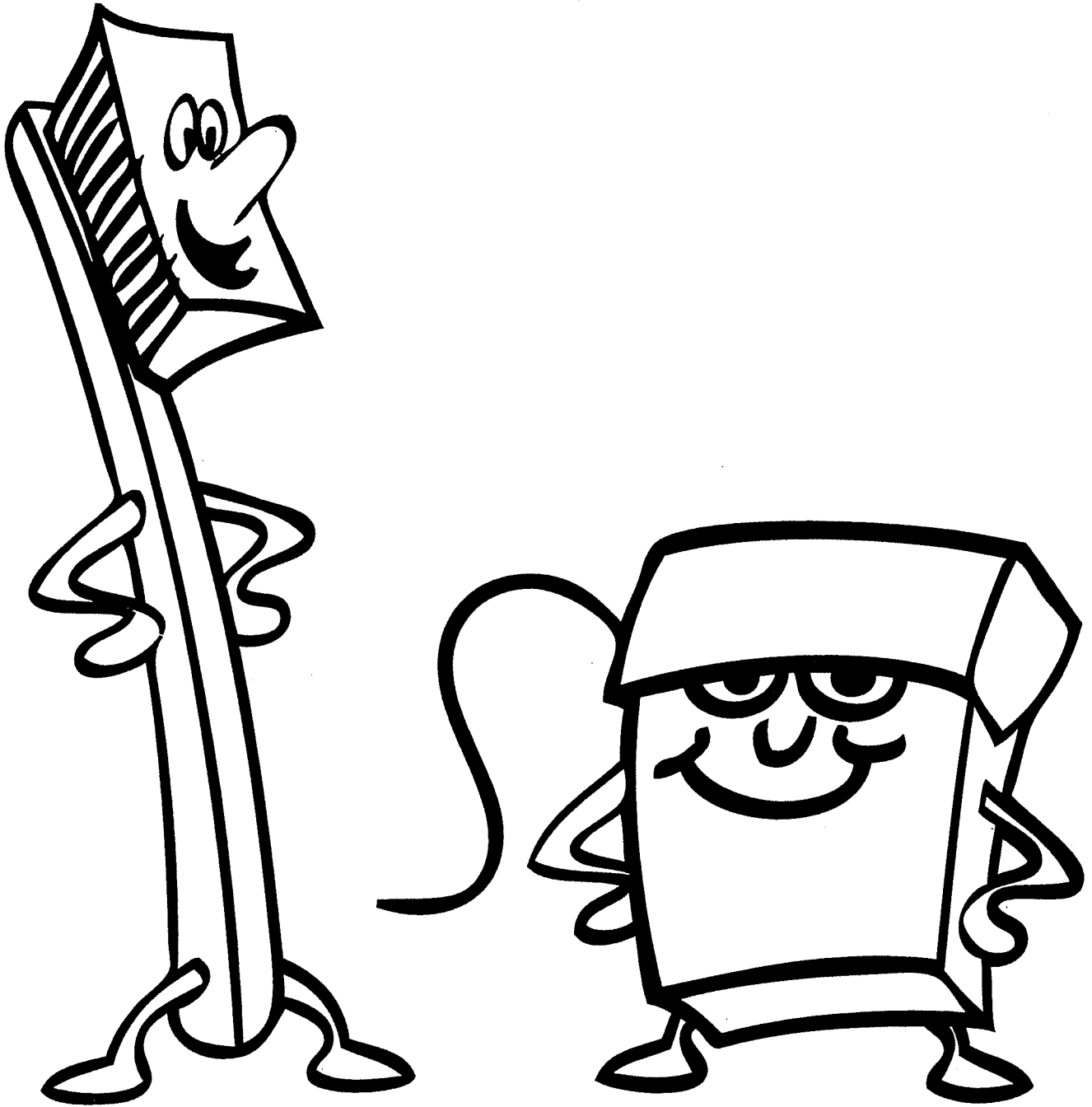
- Brush the outer surfaces, the inside surfaces and the chewing surfaces of all teeth.

- To clean the inside surface of the front teeth, tilt the brush vertically and make several up-and-down strokes.



- Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and keep your breath fresh.



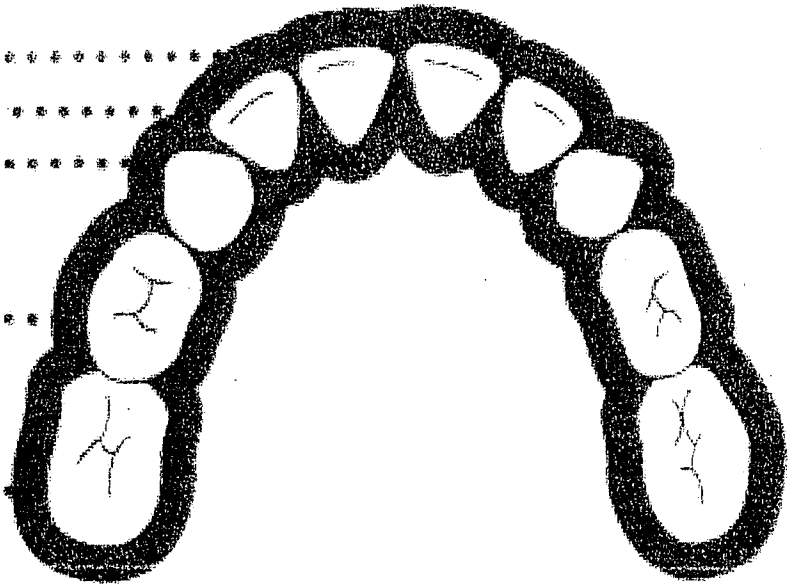


# Brush and Floss

# YOUR TEETH

## UPPER TEETH

- CENTRAL INCISOR .....
- LATERAL INCISOR .....
- CANINE [CUSPID] .....
- FIRST MOLAR .....
- SECOND MOLAR .....



## LOWER TEETH

- SECOND MOLAR .....
- FIRST MOLAR .....
- CANINE [CUSPID] .....
- LATERAL INCISOR .....
- CENTRAL INCISOR .....

