

A circular collage of six diverse, smiling children's faces, arranged in a circle. The children are of various ethnicities and ages, all looking towards the camera with bright, happy expressions. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

A Guide To Keeping Your Child's Smile Shining Through!

**The importance of early
childhood dental care.**

Produced by the Connecticut Department of Public Health



Help Your Child Keep That Beautiful Smile a Lifetime. Baby Teeth are SO IMPORTANT!

- They help your child eat and grow properly
- They help your child speak properly
- They help the adult (permanent) teeth grow and come into the mouth properly
- They help your child to have a beautiful smile and feel good about themselves

Tooth decay – even in baby teeth – can be very serious

- Tooth decay is an infection that can spread to the face and rest of the body
- Tooth decay can be very painful
- Tooth decay can make serious medical problems even worse
- Tooth decay in baby teeth can damage the adult (permanent) teeth growing beneath them
- Rotten teeth can make your child feel bad about how they look, stop them from being with other kids, and make it hard for them to learn in school



How Can You Help Your Child Have a Healthy Smile and GOOD HEALTH?

- Tooth decay is an infection caused by germs (bacteria) that live in the mouth. When there are too many germs in the mouth and your child eats sugary foods, such as soda, juice, candy and cookies, holes (cavities) can be made in the teeth - so, be sure to limit how much sugary foods your child eats as well as the number of times a day your child eats sugary foods
- Parents and caregivers need to keep their own mouths clean and healthy to prevent spreading the germs that cause tooth decay to their children
- Don't clean a child's pacifier with your own saliva or share any spoons or cups to keep from sharing germs
- Never put an infant to bed with a bottle filled with juice, milk, or other drinks that contain sugar and limit fruit juice to mealtimes only
- Wipe your child's mouth and gums after feedings in their first year with a soft, clean wash cloth and start to brush your child's teeth as soon as the first baby tooth comes into the mouth with a very soft toothbrush or washcloth
- Help your child brush until they are 6 or 7 years old
- Brush your child's teeth at least twice a day - before bedtime is the most important time to brush
- Use a very tiny amount of toothpaste with fluoride on a child-size soft nylon toothbrush after the first tooth comes in
- When you help your child brush their teeth, stand or sit behind your child, face the mirror or sink
- Lift your child's lip to brush at the gum line and behind the teeth and be sure to brush their tongue
- Brush the teeth for 2 full minutes, then have your child spit out the toothpaste - do not rinse with water

The Good News is Tooth Decay is Preventable





How You Can Help Your Children Feel Good About Their Smiles

Find a dentist

- You should bring your child to the dentist **by his/her first birthday**
- If your child is a HUSKY member, you can find a dentist by calling the member services number on the back of your insurance card, or call 1.800.CT HUSKY (1.877.284.8759) and ask for a list of dentists in your plan
- If you have other dental insurance, you can call your insurance provider and ask for a list of dentists in your plan
- If you do not have dental insurance, you can visit the CT Department of Public Health Office of Oral Health website www.ct.gov/dph to find a list of Community Health Center Dental Clinics

Make a dental appointment

- At the same time you make an appointment with the dentist for your child, let the dental staff know if your child has any special needs or medical conditions
- Make sure you have the directions to the dentist's office before the day of your child's appointment
- If you cannot keep your appointment or will be late, let the dental office know as soon as possible



How to Make the Dental Visit a Great Experience

- Help your child brush his/her teeth before you leave for your appointment
- Say only pleasant things about the dental visit to help your child feel good about going, never use words like “pain” or “you’re going to get a shot”
- Try to get to the dental appointment 15 minutes early to fill out forms and help keep everyone on time



How to Work With Your Dentist

- Talk to the dentist or hygienist about any fears or questions you or your child may have
- Talk to the dentist about any medicine your child is taking, and any physical, general health, or behavior problems they may have
- Let the dentist or hygienist tell your child what to expect during the appointment
- To protect your child's health, be sure to review and follow any home-care instructions the dentist or dental hygienist may give you - such as the best way to brush your child's teeth, or how to take any medicine the dentist prescribes
- If there are any instructions you don't understand, ask your dentist or dental hygienist to explain them to you again
- Ask the dentist about scheduling a cleaning appointment every six months



How to Get The Most Out of Your Dental Visit

You and your child have the right to...

- Be called by your proper name and treated with respect
- Know the names of the dentist and other office staff who are taking care of your child
- Know ahead of time what the dentist feels is the best treatment plan for your child
- Ask questions of the dentist and other dental staff, and get clear answers that help you understand your child's dental health and treatment, and future plans for dental care
- Ask the dentist to change the treatment plan to help with any of your concerns, such as finances or time
- Have special arrangements made to help your child with any special needs because of health and disability
- Take back your consent and stop your child's dental treatment at any time
- Get help from your dentist for any dental emergencies





Take This Helpful Reminder Checklist With You to Your Dental Visit



BEFORE Your Dental Appointment

- Make sure you have the directions to the dentist's office
- If your child has HUSKY insurance, call 1.877.284.8759, if you need help with transportation or if you need someone to help translate, call 1.877.284.8759
- Let the dental office know if your child has any special needs or medical conditions
- Help your child brush their teeth

AT The Dental Office

- Talk to the dentist about any fears or questions you or your child may have
- Ask the dentist about your child's dental treatment plan
- Ask the dentist if your child needs extra fluoride
- Make an appointment for the next visit

Take Good Care of Your Child's Smile to Keep it Shining Through!



Connecticut Department
of Public Health

www.ct.gov/dph



Connecticut Department
of Public Health

www.ct.gov/dph



For more information, contact:
Connecticut Department of Public Health
Office of Oral Health

860.509.7382

