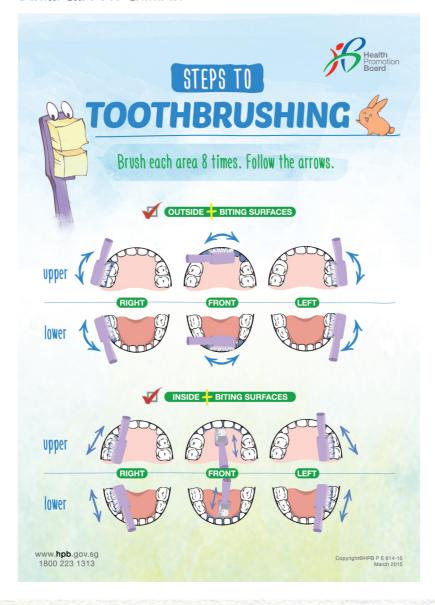## Dental Care For Children

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay, or damage to the tooth's surface or enamel, is caused by mouth bacteria acting on sugars in food and drinks, producing acids which eat away at your child's teeth.

What can my child do to prevent tooth decay?

Formula milk is sweet. Brush your child's teeth after (not before) his last milk feed. Do not put your child to bed with formula milk in a bottle as this can cause tooth decay.

In the day, do not use the milk bottle as a pacifier. Frequent consumption of sweetened beverage, such as formula milk, in a milk bottle can cause severe tooth decay.

Take your child to a child-friendly dentist when they turn 1 year old.

Your child should eat 3 main meals and 1 to 2 snacks a day. Dried fruits such as raisins, sweetened cereals, cakes and biscuits with filling or fruit juices have high sugar content. Frequent consumption causes tooth decay. Nuts, cheese and yogurt naturally sweetened with fruits are better choices.

Brush your child's teeth once they emerge, usually around 6 months old. Use a toothpaste containing at least 1000pm fluoride twice a day to prevent tooth decay. Make sure your child does not swallow the toothpaste. Floss daily.

Commonly Asked Questions About Fluoride

Why is fluoride good for teeth?
It protects your child's teeth from tooth decay by strengthening it.

Are there any side effects of using too much fluoride?
Yes. Your child can get fluorosis on his permanent teeth from swallowing too much fluoride toothpaste. Fluorosis results in a change in colour or texture of the teeth.

How do I prevent fluorosis?
Teach your child not to swallow the fluoride toothpaste. Control the amount of toothpaste used.

A A smear amount (size of a rice-grain) of toothpaste is recommended for children 3 years old and below, who tend to swallow toothpaste.

B A pea-sized amount of toothpaste is recommended for children aged above 3, who can spit toothpaste out effectively.

Supervise your child when he brushes his teeth, and keep toothpaste out of reach.

Source: Health Promotion Board

An initiative by:

KK Women's and Children's Hospital
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Polyclinics
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