

# Children's Dental T I M E L I N E

**0-4  
months**

(or before the first  
teeth come in)

Gently wipe the gums with a soft cloth or rubber finger toothbrush a few times a day for 2-3 seconds. Establishing a dental hygiene routine now makes it easier to maintain one as baby grows.

## Avoid baby tooth decay

Don't put your baby to sleep with a bottle of milk or juice, or coat a pacifier with sugar or honey. These sugary substances can feed bacteria, causing cavities or even tooth loss later in life.

**4-6  
months**

(or after first  
teeth come in)

Continue to wipe your child's gums, while also cleaning teeth surfaces. From here on out, the oral health routine should occur at least twice a day, especially after eating and before sleep. It's important to remove cavity-causing plaque from the teeth as soon as they appear.

## Baby's first dentist appointment

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) benefits begin for covered children at age one. Ask your dentist about your child's recommended exam schedule. The TDP covers two exams and cleanings in a consecutive 12-month period.

**1  
year**

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) and American Dental Association (ADA) recommend children see a dentist at age one. TDP benefits are posted online at [uccitdp.com](http://uccitdp.com). Parents should continue to help with brushing.

**2-3  
years**

Help your child brush, while teaching how to spit out the non-fluoride toothpaste. Switch to a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste once spitting becomes consistent. Once teeth are fitting together snugly, start helping your child to floss, working up to at least once a day. All 20 primary (baby) teeth should have come in by age 3 – if not, this is a great time to make a trip to the dentist for evaluation.



## Time to break the habit

If your child is still using a pacifier or sucking his or her thumb after age 3, consult with your dentist.

**3-6  
years**

Adult help is still necessary at this stage. Let your child first brush independently while you supervise, then assist with any missed areas of the mouth if necessary. Continue to help with flossing as well. Ask your dentist about when to take first dental x-rays and if dental sealants would be beneficial.

**6-10  
years**

While your child may be perfectly able to brush and floss independently, adult supervision is still important to ensure that it gets done – and that proper technique is consistently used. Your child will begin to lose his or her baby teeth.

**10+  
years**

Ideally, your child should have a sound understanding of home dental care by now, but it's common to still have room to improve. By age 12 or 13, check with your dentist to confirm that all permanent teeth are in place, with the exception of the wisdom teeth. Your dentist should continue to monitor for wisdom teeth through the later teenage or early adulthood years, as they may need to be pulled and/or surgically removed from beneath the gum line.

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#### Sources:

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- 4: When to Start Flossing; Oral B; 2016
- 5: Take Care of Your Child's Teeth; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; September 2016
- 6: Eruption Charts; American Dental Association; 2016
- 7: The Life of a Tooth; The Academy of General Dentistry; 2016
- 8: Infant and Children's Oral Health; New York State Department of Health; 2005
- 9: Four Developmental Milestones in Your Child's Oral Health; Colgate

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