

# 4 Stages of Childhood Smiles



Whether you've got a toddler or an elementary schooler, help your child have healthy teeth for a lifetime.

## 1 Prenatal care

Your baby's teeth begin developing during the fifth week of pregnancy, so nourish them by making the right choices.

- Eat a balanced diet.
- Get enough calcium, phosphorous and, vitamins A and D.

## 2 Infant oral care

Start cleaning your baby's gums even before his or her first teeth emerge.

- **Wipe your baby's gums.** Use a soft, damp washcloth or gauze pad.
- **Use only water in bedtime bottles.** Added and natural sugars in juices and milk can cause decay.
- **Visit the dentist.** Take your child to the dentist by his or her first birthday and every six months thereafter.

## 3 Little teeth

All baby teeth should grow in by around age 2 and a half.

- **Brush together.** Help children brush their own teeth twice a day.
- **Start flossing your child's teeth** as soon as there are two adjacent teeth.
- **Add toothpaste.** Use a small, soft-bristled toothbrush with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- **Visit the dentist** for regular cleanings and exams.

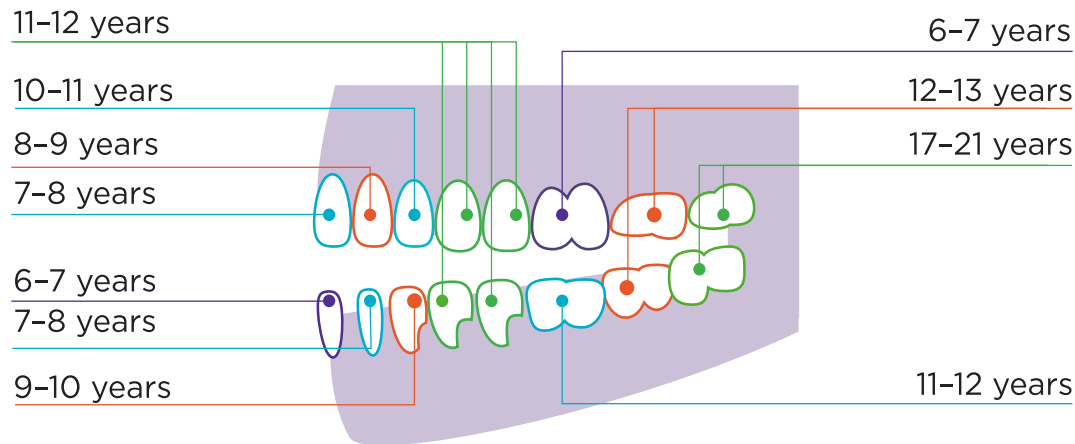
## 4 Big chompers

By age 6, your child's baby teeth may start to fall out. Baby teeth should all be replaced by around age 12.

- Children should be able to brush and floss alone.
- Adults should occasionally check for a job well done.
- Continue to visit the dentist regularly. For added protection, your dentist may recommend fluoride treatments or sealants.

**Did you know** that your child should visit the dentist by his or her first birthday?

## When do grown-up teeth grow in?



### Choose fluoride

This mineral is an essential component for maintaining your child's oral health. Fluoride may reduce dental decay by 40%.<sup>1</sup>

- Make sure your child's toothpaste contains fluoride.
- Talk to your child's dentist about supplements if your community does not have fluoridated water.
- See if your plan covers topical fluoride treatments for children.

### Consider sealants

Sealants offers a simple way to seal out decay. These plastic coverings protect the deep crevices of your children's back teeth from debris and bacteria. Ask your child's dentist about sealants as soon as your child's permanent molars grow in.<sup>2</sup>

### Make healthy smiles fun

*Grin! for Kids* is a free kid-friendly resource from Delta Dental. With tooth trivia, jokes and craft projects, this printable activity book offers a lively approach to learning about oral health. To download the latest issue, go to [deltadentalins.com/grin](https://deltadentalins.com/grin).

Check out the MySmileKids site for interactive games about dental health. Designed for children, parents and teachers, the site is packed with word games, puzzles and quizzes. Visit [mysmilekids.com](https://mysmilekids.com).

<sup>1</sup> Effect of 5% fluoride varnish application on caries among school children in rural Brazil: a randomized controlled trial. *Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology*. 40(3):267.

<sup>2</sup> Check your plan details for coverage of sealants.