

# Creating healthy little mouths

Is your child brushing and cleaning their teeth well? Are you sure you know what is good and bad for your child's teeth? It's not all about sweets and lollies; there are a lot of things that can affect the health of your child's teeth and gums. A lifetime of good dental health starts in childhood and a healthy mouth is a vital building block to a long term healthy body.

Much like adult teeth, baby teeth need to be professionally cleaned and checked regularly to ensure no decay is present, and to check that the teeth and gums are healthy. The premature loss of baby teeth can have a significant impact on the development of adult teeth and lead to long term dental problems later in life. It is also important that children develop good oral hygiene habits, and a regular visit to their dentist and oral health therapist assists in eliminating the "fear factor" that many of us have.

At Gerber Dental Group, we provide "dental care for life". We have a holistic, preventive approach to dental care and our philosophy is to provide ongoing prevention and maintenance for your entire family. Apart from a regular examination and clean, there are a number of preventive treatments you can discuss with your dental team.

## Tooth Tips for Parents!

Good oral health is an integral part of general health and well-being, especially for growing kids! Preventative measures and promoting good dental care in children forms good habits which are taken into adulthood.

### Preventive Dental Care

1. Cleaning the teeth and gums – brushing and flossing.
2. Healthy eating to keep teeth strong, and ensure adequate mental and physical development.
3. Mouthguards for physical activities to avoid damage to teeth, lips and tongue, or worse – knocked out teeth.
4. Fissure sealants on permanent molars to avoid dental decay in deep grooves and pits on teeth.
5. Regular dental visits to ensure cleaning is effective, to have custom mouthguards made, to have fissure sealants placed as advised, and to monitor the development of the teeth and jaws and advise on options such as orthodontics.



It is also important, as a parent, to know when teeth are due to come into the mouth, when baby teeth are due to fall out, what is normal or to be expected, and what should be addressed by a dental professional.

### The first dental visit

Your children are welcome to attend your preventive care visits at any age you like. Children will become familiar with the dental surgery environment and some of the dental team by attending regularly with you. We recommend that your child has their first preventive care appointment at around 2 years of age. This should be a fun visit with lots of praise and the children will be given an opportunity to explore the dental surgery and some of the noises that exist. The dentist will check the child's teeth for areas of decay and the hygienist will show the child how to brush their teeth and give the teeth a gentle polish. We will discuss fluoride, protective sealants and any tooth and jaw development issues you may have. Children also receive a take home bag of dental 'goodies'.

### Tooth Trivia:

- It takes 17 muscles to smile but 43 to frown.
- Enamel on the outside of teeth is the hardest material in the human body.
- If you don't floss, you miss cleaning 35% of your teeth.
- The most common injuries occurring in sport are of the face and mouth.

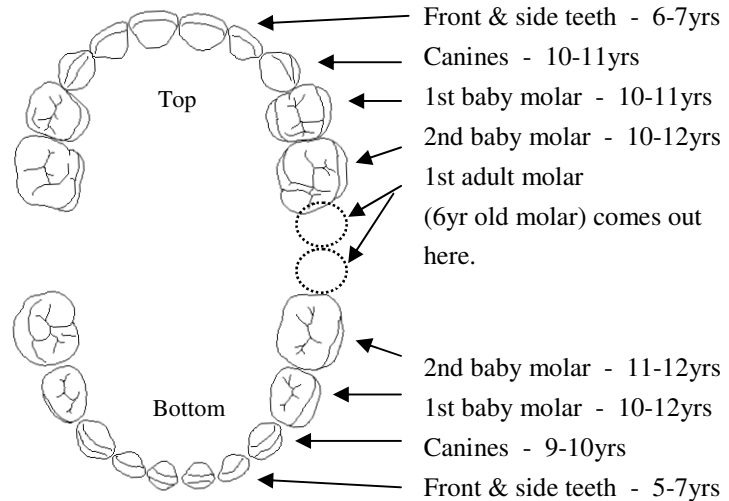
## What's all the fuss about Baby Teeth?

At three years of age your child should have a full set of 20 'deciduous' or baby teeth. These teeth play a vital role in ensuring adequate nutrition for your child, and to provide a guide for the permanent teeth. If a baby tooth is knocked-out or has to be removed before it is wobbly or due to fall out, the permanent adult tooth under the gum will only come through when it is ready. The teeth around the empty space where the baby tooth is missing will start to close and the permanent tooth will be forced to come through crooked or overlapping other teeth. Crooked and overlapping teeth are very difficult to clean, and are vulnerable to decay as a result.

The front baby teeth fall out first around 6-7yrs of age, and around the same time four permanent molars come through behind the

baby molars, these are the 6yr old molars. It is several years before all of the baby teeth are replaced by permanent teeth,

**When are baby teeth due to fall out?**



and the baby molars are usually the last to fall out, anywhere from 10-12yrs of age. These are the largest of the baby teeth, and therefore maintain the most space for their permanent successors.

## Play Sport...? Protect Teeth!!

Children who play contact sports, or participate in activities of high accident risk need to wear a custom-made mouthguard.

The most common injuries occurring in sport are of the face and mouth. These can involve lacerations to the tongue, lips and cheeks, fractures or chips of the teeth (most commonly the top front teeth), or in some cases the teeth are knocked out entirely.

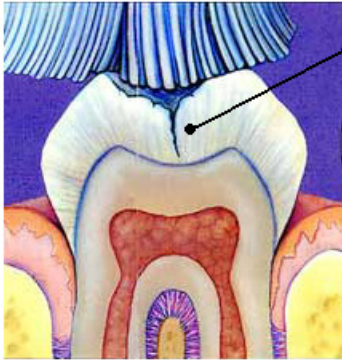
The damage caused to teeth via physical trauma is usually irreversible, and may carry lifetime consequences. The simplest way to avoid permanent damage or missing teeth is to ensure your child wears a custom-made mouthguard for all contact sports and high risk activities. Store bought 'mouldable' mouthguards are poor fitting as the teeth do not seat properly and the mouthguard can fall out or dislodge during sport.

A custom-made mouthguard is laboratory fabricated and made from durable material. It is made specifically to fit each mouth and the arrangement of teeth! There are lots of colours and combinations available, which makes them a bit more fun too! Remember, as your child's mouth grows and teeth move, a new mouthguard should be made.



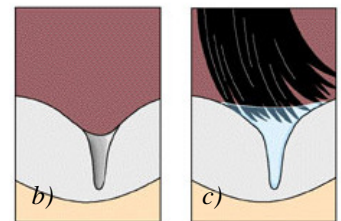
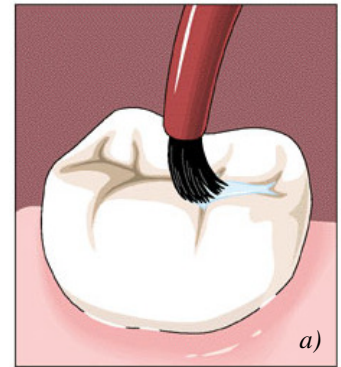
## Sealing out Dental Decay

First Permanent Molar teeth are typically referred to as '6 year old molars' as they erupt around 5-7yrs of age. These molars are adult teeth, and should be effectively maintained to last a lifetime!



Toothbrush bristles are too thick to clean in deep grooves and pits in teeth.

The biting surfaces of all molar teeth are covered in deep grooves and pits, which are often difficult to keep clean. An effective preventive measure to avoid decay and holes in these teeth is to place a thin liquid seal over the surface which runs into the grooves and pits, and is set or cured to be hard. This procedure is usually called 'Fissure Sealing' as it 'seals' the 'fissures' or grooves in the teeth to reduce the risk of decay!



The seal is painted over the biting surface (see image a)), so the deep grooves (b)) are filled and protected

## Smart Snacking for Happy Smiles

What kids eat and when they eat can play a big part in determining whether or not they will be likely to develop dental decay. The enamel encasing the teeth is the hardest structure in the human body, but it can still be slowly broken down, or 'eaten into' by acids—usually dietary acids. Sugar from foods or drinks contributes mainly to this dietary acid, because the naturally occurring bacteria in the mouth convert sugars to acids. The longer the acid remains on the tooth, the weaker the enamel gets. The more often the same area has acid on it,

the weaker it gets again, until eventually the enamel fractures and a hole forms. This is the start of decay and can only be restored with a filling or restoration. Ideally sweets and sugars should be consumed only at mealtimes (and not instead of a meal!) as saliva flow is greater at these times, which neutralises acids in the mouth.



### Top Tips for Top Teeth:

- Drink plenty of water
- Eat a variety of food from all food groups
- Cut down on snacking between meals
- Brush twice and floss daily
- Have regular dental check-ups

Nutritious snacks for children that are 'tooth friendly' include:

- Fresh fruit & veg (dried fruits are not encouraged as they are sticky!)
- Dairy foods such as cheese and yoghurt, and **plain** milk.
- Breads, pita bread, rice cakes and crackers.