

## ORAL HEALTH TIPS:

Parents are their child's most important partner in providing oral care and working with the dentist to prevent and remedy dental health issues. The following steps can optimize oral health care:



### How to Protect Your Child's (and your) Smile:

Lift the lip – Once a month look for changes on your child's and your own teeth. If you see white or brown spots on the teeth, or anything unusual, phone your dentist or ask your doctor.

Protect your children's teeth with fluoride – Some water supplies have natural fluoride. If yours does not, your baby or older child may benefit from topical fluoride to make the teeth stronger and better able to fight cavities.

Brush daily – The younger you start, the easier it is for children to develop the habit. Clean infant gums and first teeth with a moist cloth or small, soft toothbrush every night before bed. For toddlers use a small bit of fluoridated toothpaste (the size of a rice grain) if recommended by your dentist.

Limit sugar – Cavities are caused by bacteria, and bacteria feed on sugar. Limit sugar, juice, soda-pop and sticky, sugary foods such as gum and candy. Offer water instead of juice or sugar drinks. Limiting sugar also helps prevent gaining extra pounds, developing diabetes and other chronic illnesses.



Help your children brush their teeth - **Brush** after breakfast and at bedtime as well.

See your dentist regularly – Babies should have their teeth checked by their first birthday and regular dental care should start at age 1.

Take care of yourself! – Your children learn by watching you. Poor oral health can contribute to poor overall health. Show your children the value a healthy smile. Brush and floss your teeth, make regular dental visits, and take good care of yourself. If you have questions or concerns, please ask!

Information provided by: [Medicalhome.org](http://Medicalhome.org) Promoting partnerships between families, primary health care providers & the community. and Whatcom Co. Dentist-Physician Partnership Project; St. Joseph Hospital [www.happyteeth.org](http://www.happyteeth.org)

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