

# Your Health Matters

## TOOTHBRUSHING FROM DAY ONE

Taking care of your child's teeth from birth will help ensure teeth grow in strong, straight, and healthy. Healthy teeth allow children to eat nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables, and speak clearly.

Start brushing your infant's gums with a washcloth or infant toothbrush even before the first baby teeth appear. Breastfeed your baby and give her a pacifier at bedtime rather than a bottle, which can cause tooth decay.

When your baby gets his first tooth, brush it twice a day with a soft-bristle toothbrush designed for an infant or child. Use a fluoride-free toothpaste, and put only as much as a grain of rice on the toothbrush.

When your child turns 3 years old, she should start using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste that contains fluoride. Choose toothpaste that says "ADA accepted" on it. This means it is approved by the American Dental Association.

Help your young child brush his teeth so you can make sure he reaches every tooth. He should brush for at least two minutes, twice a day. Sing a song or use a timer to make sure he brushes long enough. Teach him to spit toothpaste out after brushing, instead of swallowing it.

Your child should also floss her teeth daily to remove food from between the teeth. You can buy child-friendly dental floss products that will be easy for her to hold and use.

Your child should visit a dentist for a check-up before her first birthday. After that, she should visit the dentist twice a year to have her teeth cleaned and checked.

A healthy mouth depends on healthy habits from the very beginning. Start by brushing your baby's gums twice a day, and teach your child early to take care of her teeth.

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at [www.montgomerycountyhealth.org](http://www.montgomerycountyhealth.org) or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. ■

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