

Your Child's Dental Health

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When can I expect my child's teeth to start coming in?

Your child's first teeth will begin coming in between three and sixteen months (usually around six months). The two bottom front teeth will be the first to come in, and the four upper teeth will follow in four to eight weeks. The timing of the eruption of the first tooth is largely influenced by genetics, so if there is a family history of getting the first tooth late, then your child will probably also get his/her first tooth late.

Your child will continue to get new teeth until all twenty primary (baby) teeth are present, usually around three years old, with most children getting about four new teeth every four months. Children begin shedding their first teeth when they are around six to seven years old, and this process is complete with the loss of the second molars between the ages of 11 to 13 years old.

Permanent teeth begin erupting between the ages of six to seven and continue erupting until your child gets his/her third molars (or wisdom teeth), around 17 to 22 years old.

When should I begin cleaning my child's teeth?

Once your child's teeth begin erupting, you can begin cleaning them by wiping them with a moist washcloth. As your child gets more teeth, you can begin to use a soft child's toothbrush. You should use just a pea-size amount of a fluoride toothpaste or a non-fluoride toothpaste (like Baby OraGel) until your child is able to spit it out.

When should I take my child to the dentist?

According to the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the first visit to the dentist should be when the first tooth comes in, usually between six and twelve months of age. The American Academy of Pediatrics used to recommend that the first visit to the dentist be at three years of age. Now, because so many have cavities by the time they start kindergarten, the AAP states that "high risk" children should see a dentist six months after their first tooth erupts or before they are 12 months old. For those children who are not "high risk," we have found that if they accompany their parents at the parents' regular hygiene appointment, the children become acquainted with the office; if they return soon thereafter for their own appointment, their first visit is highly successful.

Are baby teeth really that important to my child?

Primary or "baby" teeth are important for many reasons. Not only do they help children speak clearly and chew naturally, they also aid in forming a path that permanent teeth can follow when they are ready to erupt.

Does my child need fluoride supplements?

In general, yes. All children need supplemental fluoride after they are six months old to help prevent cavities. Most children can get this fluoride from the water they drink, if they are in an area where the city water supply has an adequate amount of fluoride in it (greater than 0.6 ppm), and they are drinking tap water.

Sources of water that generally don't have enough fluoride include well water and filtered or bottled water; however, some brands of bottled water (or nursery water) do have fluoride added to them. In addition, commercially prepared, pre-mixed infant formulas do not contain an adequate amount of fluoride, so consider using a powder or concentrated formula and mixing it with tap water. Supplement your infant with extra tap water or talk to your pediatrician about giving your child fluoride supplements.

If you only use a water-filter pitcher or a counter-top filter, it most likely won't remove the fluoride from the water; other types of water filters might, though. Generally, it is better to have your child drink water that is supplemented with fluoride instead of giving him/her extra fluoride drops or supplements. Too much fluoride can cause fluorosis, which is a permanent white to brown discoloration of the enamel of the teeth. It is easier to develop fluorosis if you are giving your child fluoride drops, and he/she is still getting fluoride from his/her diet.

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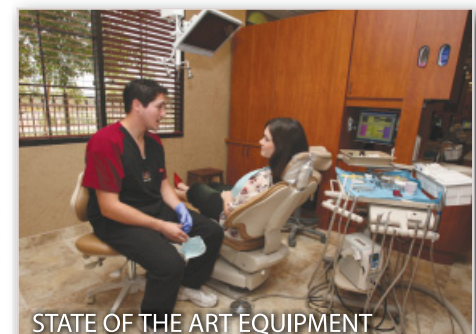
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Dr. David Rush attended Brigham Young University for Undergrad degrees and received his Doctorate from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry. After graduation, Dr. Rush and his family moved to Arizona, and opened Ahwatukee Family Dental. Dr. Rush is a member of the Central Arizona Dental Association, Arizona Dental Association, The Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation, The Academy of General Dentistry, and The American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. Just recently, Dr. Rush opened Fulton Ranch Dental in Chandler, located at 4909 South Alma School Road, Suite 1. You can reach the Chandler office at 480.895.7070. Dr. Rush's Ahwatukee Family Dental office is located at 11022 South 51st Street, Suite 105. The phone number there is 480.893.7674



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