Early childhood is a critical period for dental development, and factors like diet, oral hygiene, and preventive care play a significant role. Common childhood oral health issues include tooth decay and misalignment of the teeth and jaws. Limit sugary drinks, such as juice and soda, and offer fluoridated water. Children with oral health concerns are more likely to miss school. When not treated, oral health problems can lead to additional health concerns in childhood and later in life.

**Importance of oral healthcare in childhood**

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**Caring for your baby’s teeth begins during pregnancy**

- Your prenatal nutrition impacts the development of your baby’s mouth and teeth.
- Prenatal vitamins and a nutritionally-dense diet help ensure baby gets all the vitamins and minerals they need while their teeth are forming.

**Oral hygiene is important for infants**

- Begin developing oral hygiene routines early by wiping down baby’s gums with a clean, damp cloth to remove any remaining milk or formula after feeding.
- Keep an eye out for their first tooth and begin soft brushing when it erupts.
- Schedule your child’s first appointment with a dentist within 6 months of the first tooth erupting or by age 1.
Steps for optimal oral health during childhood

- Develop an oral hygiene routine at home, including brushing twice a day and flossing once a day.
- Help your child brush their teeth until they have good brushing skills and if your child is younger than 6, watch them brush.
- Take your child to see their dentist twice a year for routine care, and ask about preventive measures such as dental sealants.
- Talk to your child’s dentist or doctor about putting fluoride varnish on your child’s teeth as soon as the first tooth erupts.

Community-based programs

- Collaborative efforts between healthcare providers, schools, and community organizations can improve children’s oral health outcomes.
- School-based dental programs offer many services to children while they are at school, which can reduce the burdens of cost, transportation, and missed work on parents.
- You can contribute to your child’s oral health by giving consent to participate in a school-based program.

For more resources, check out KOHC’s Resource Hub: [KOHC’s Resource Hub](#)