

# ORAL HEALTH & CHILDREN

Prioritizing your child's oral health is an important component of their overall well-being. By understanding the impact of childhood development on oral health and ensuring access to pediatric oral healthcare, you can play a vital role in promoting a healthier future for your child.

Kentucky Oral Health Coalition  
**KOHIC**  
For a lifetime of oral health

## Importance of oral healthcare in childhood

- 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.

## 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.

