

Early Dental Care

Investing in your child's future



PrimeWest
HEALTH™



1-866-431-0801 (toll free); TTY **1-800-627-3529** or **711**

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Tooth decay is a major problem in some groups of children across the country. These groups include children who cannot go to the dentist for regular checkups and cleanings.

We have created the information in this booklet to help you and your child have healthier mouths and nicer smiles.

Stopping tooth decay is very important for your child.

Pain. Tooth decay can be painful for your child if it isn't fixed. It can cause your child to lose sleep at night and not do well in school or play well with other children.

Tooth loss. If tooth decay gets very bad, your child could lose some teeth. This might make it harder to chew. And your child might feel self-conscious about his/her smile.

Social development and a confident smile. You can help your child have a nice smile and grow up to be healthy and feel more confident. Be sure to teach your child how to take care of his/her teeth very early in life and try to visit a dentist and dental hygienist every 6 months.



Early Childhood Caries

What is Early Childhood Caries or ECC?

ECC is an infection in your child’s mouth. It is caused by bacteria (germs) that can be passed from one person to another. These germs cause tooth decay (cavities) and destroy your child’s teeth. By taking good care of your child’s teeth, you can stop these cavities from starting and help your child have a nice smile.



Putting liquids other than water in a bottle or sippy cup at bedtime can cause "bottle rot."

What causes it?

Two things cause ECC: germs and food for the germs to eat. Both need time in your child’s mouth for germs to hurt the teeth.

Some foods that germs like to eat are:

- Candy, chocolate
- Cakes, cereal
- Bananas, raisins
- Milk (both breast and bottled)
- Soda pop
- Fruit juice

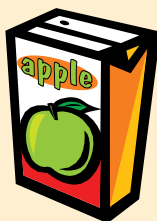


Food for the germs can be almost anything except water!

Avoiding germs

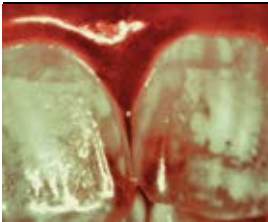
- Germs live in saliva (spit) as well as on teeth. These germs can be passed from person to person. Mothers, fathers, and other caregivers shouldn't ever let their saliva get near a baby's mouth. Babies should not be allowed to put their fingers in people's mouths.
- Adults should never pre-chew their child's food, kiss babies on the lips, share spoons or other eating utensils, or clean or wet a pacifier by putting it in their own mouths first.

Foods that germs like to eat



Fluoride

- Fluoride is very important and children need it to keep their teeth healthy.
- It helps make teeth strong and prevents decay (helps stop germs from destroying the teeth).
- Fluoride is found in most city water supplies and most types of toothpaste.
- Only use water with fluoride to make a baby's bottle. Do not use bottled or filtered water.
- If your water comes from a well, ask your health care provider or dentist about using a fluoride supplement.
- The people at the dentist's office can also give your child special fluoride treatments to help make his/her teeth strong and safe from germs.



"Fluorosis"

Too much of a good thing...

Even though fluoride in toothpaste is very good for teeth, it can be bad if too much is swallowed. Fluorosis is caused from swallowing too much fluoride.

Fluoride varnish is available...

Where?

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Public Health; Head Start; or your primary care clinic may offer fluoride varnish application.

Why?

Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on the teeth to prevent cavities from forming and to stop cavities that have already started. Fluoride varnish can be used on children from the time they have their first teeth. The protective effect will continue to work for several months.

Brushing Teeth

If you don't brush your teeth enough, the germs build up on teeth and form a thin white or brownish-orange film. This film can be hard to see, but it causes cavities.

Brush 2 times a day with fluoride toothpaste. Brushing 2 times each day removes this film before it gets too hard to take off without a dental visit.

Brush before bedtime. Always brush before bedtime because "cavity bugs" do not sleep. Brushing stops cavities from forming in your teeth because the germs are brushed away before they can hurt your teeth. This is why you can get cavities if you don't brush your teeth enough!

Use the right toothbrush.

A toothbrush is too old if its bristles are bent or flared. When this happens, throw it away and start using a new one.



Age guidelines for brushing

- **Before your baby has any teeth**, clean his/her mouth 2 times each day with a wet cloth, wiping gums and mouth.
- When the **first tooth** comes in, use a wet cloth or small, soft brush.
- **Under the age of 3**, only use a little bit (the size of a grain of rice) of fluoride toothpaste.



Toothpaste = a grain of rice

- **After age 3**, keep brushing your child's teeth 2 times each day with a small, soft brush until age 4 or 5. Be sure to not use more than a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste spread in a thin layer on the toothbrush. Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste.
- **After age 5**, your child should be able to brush his/her own teeth, but you should still watch so you know your child does not swallow any toothpaste.
- **After about age 8 or 9**, your child should be able to brush his/her own teeth without supervision.



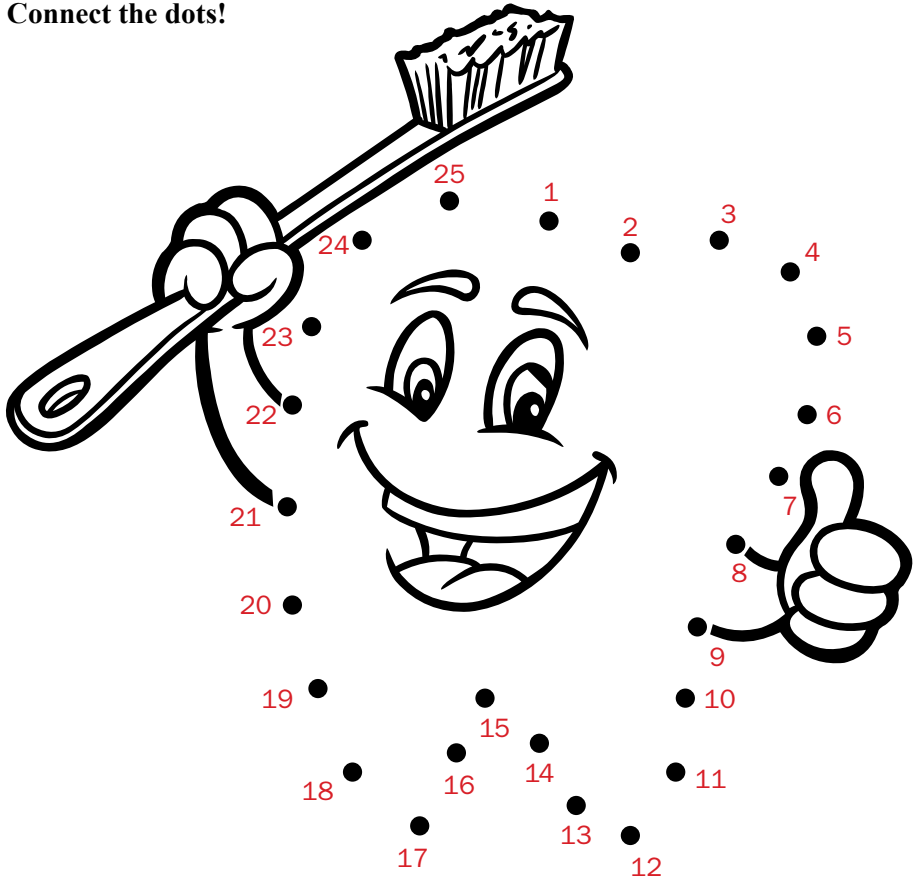


Tips to help your child have a healthy, confident smile

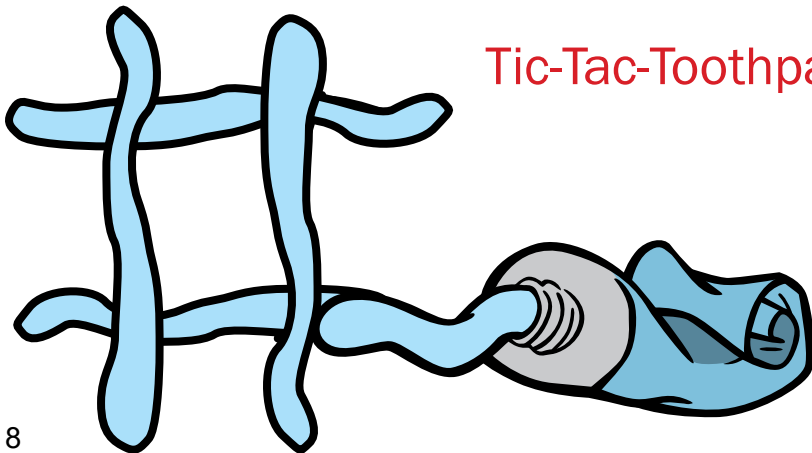
- **Avoid bottle rot.** You should never put your child to bed with anything in a bottle or sippy cup except water. Other liquids can cause very bad tooth decay, sometimes called “bottle rot” or “baby bottle tooth decay.” All liquids other than water should only be given during mealtimes.
- **Avoid unhealthy snacks.** Try not to give your child foods and liquids that are high in sugar as snacks between meals. Give children raw fruits and vegetables, pretzels, cheese, yogurt, and unsweetened applesauce instead of soda pop, candy, sweetened cereals, or fruit roll-ups.
- **Switch to a cup.** By about age 1, your child should not be using a bottle very much. Bottle-feeding after about age 1 could make your child get more cavities.
- **Visit the dentist.** Your child’s first visit to the dentist should be when his/her first tooth comes in, but no later than age 1. This will help you find out if your child could get ECC (many cavities) and check to see if your child’s mouth is healthy. If you cannot see a dentist, your child should see another health care provider instead to talk about your child’s teeth.
- **Consider sealants.** As your child gets older, the dentist or dental hygienist can apply “sealants” to help stop cavities. Sealants are thin, white coatings that are painted on back teeth at about age 6 or 7 so germs cannot cause tooth decay on those teeth.

Healthy Teeth, Healthy Smiles

Connect the dots!



Tic-Tac-Toothpaste!

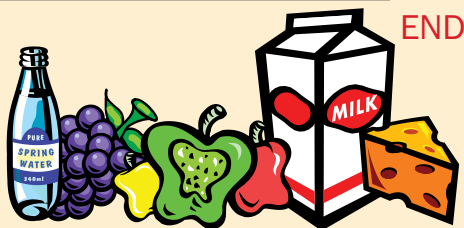
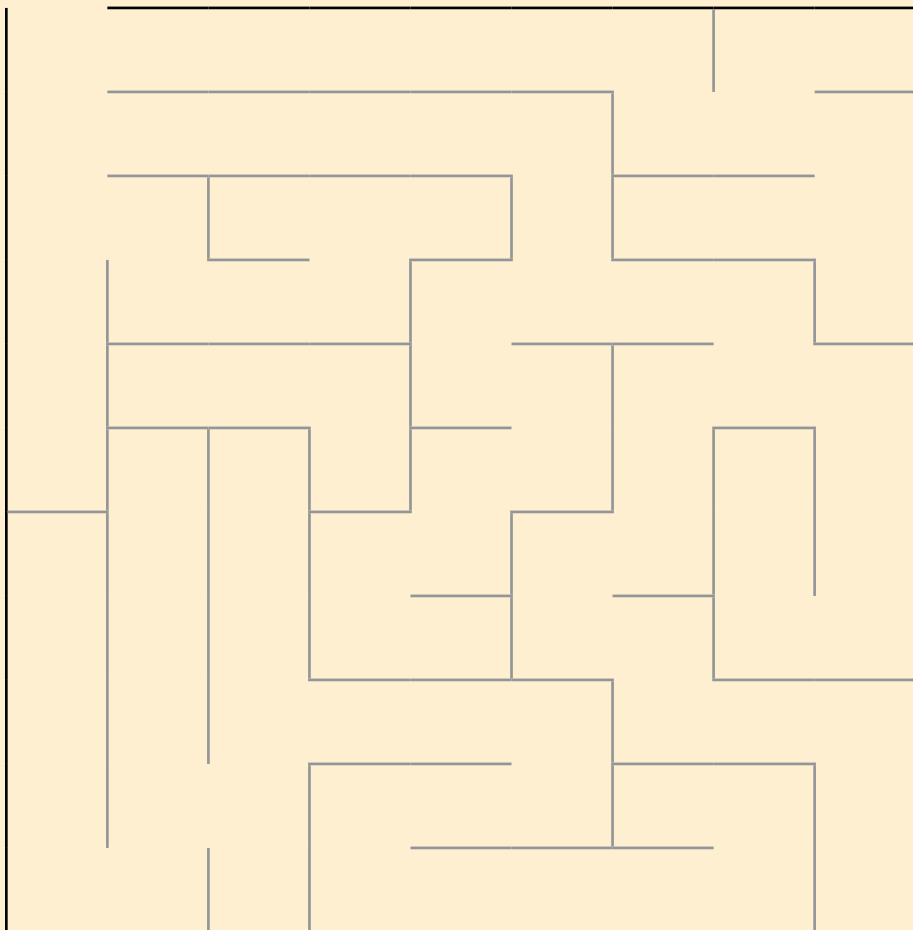




Eat Healthy Foods

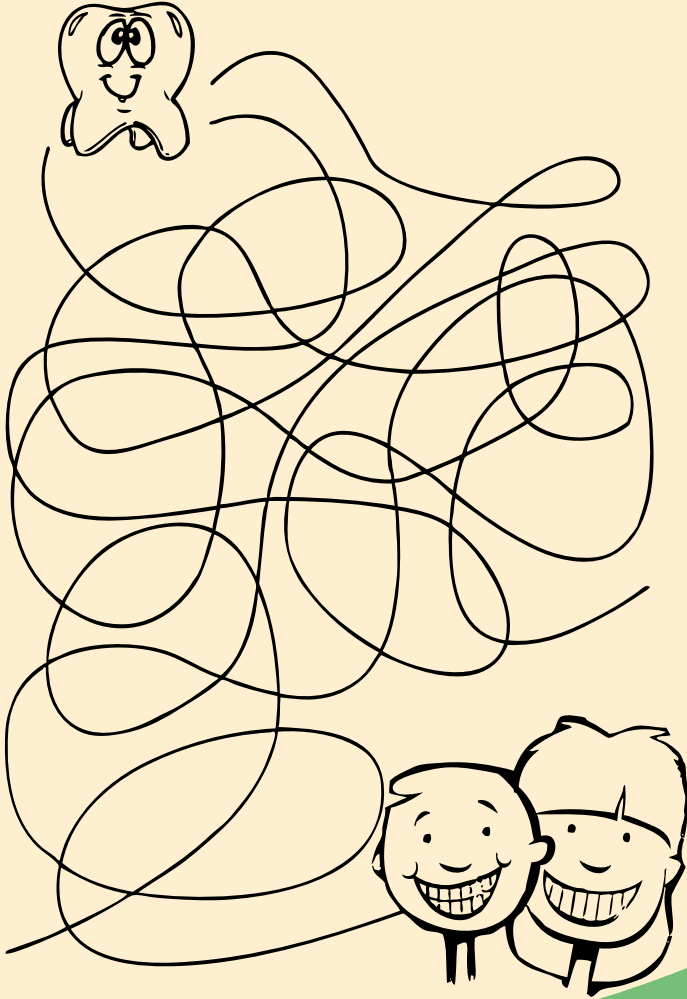
Find the path that will take the kids to the healthy foods!

START



END

Find the line that will take the
tooth to a healthy smile!



3905 Dakota St
Alexandria, MN 56308
www.primewest.org

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Reduce Reuse Recycle