

Oral Health Best Practices

Age-appropriate Oral Health Anticipatory Guidance

Stage	Summary of Anticipatory Guidance
Infancy (Prenatal to 11 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Healthcare professionals ask questions about maternal diet, good oral health hygiene, and attendance at regular dental checkups to set the stage for optimal child oral health. ● In the early months of infancy, guidance focuses on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Holding the infant while feeding – Never putting an infant to bed with a bottle – Using a cloth or soft toothbrush with tap water and a small smear of toothpaste to gently clean gums and new teeth ● As an infant reaches 6 months, guidance expands to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Introducing fluoride varnish and fluoridated water or fluoride supplements – Minimizing exposure to natural or refined sugars in the infant's mouth – Weaning off bottles as the infant approaches 12 months – Discussing the recommendation of no juice until age 1 year – Finding a dental home
Early Childhood (1 to 4 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Routines are a critical component of early childhood. Healthcare professionals support families by reinforcing tooth brushing as a routine conducted twice daily. ● At the 12-month health supervision visit, healthcare professionals focus on the importance of a dental home, providing information about what families can expect. ● Healthcare professionals continue to emphasize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Eating a healthy diet – Avoiding sweetened food and beverages – Keeping bottles out of cribs or beds – Avoiding sippy cups with juice – Using fluoride varnish and fluoridated water or fluoride supplements
Middle Childhood (5 to 10 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oral health is integrated into larger discussions of children's physical growth and development, which are priority areas in health supervision visits. ● Healthcare professionals continue to focus on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Oral health hygiene (daily tooth brushing and flossing) – Connections to a dental home – The importance of caring for permanent teeth – Limiting sweetened beverages and snacks – The importance of dental sealants ● As children become engaged in contact sports, healthcare professionals emphasize the importance of using a mouth guard.



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Adolescence (11 to 21 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to the middle childhood years, oral health is integrated into the priority areas of physical health and development. • Healthcare professionals shift conversations during adolescent years to help them understand the importance of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Routine oral health hygiene (daily tooth brushing and flossing) – Limiting soda and sweetened beverages – Reducing in-between meal snacks – Chewing sugarless gum – Using a mouth guard during contact sports • In later adolescence health supervision visits, healthcare professionals begin conversations about smoking and drug use that can impact oral health.
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Hagan JF, Shaw JS, Duncan PM, eds. *Bright Futures: [Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents](#)*. 4th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2017

