



Back-to-School Tips for Maintaining Happy, Healthy Mouths

With the new school year fast approaching, the Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch (ADAVB) has released a number of tips to help parents and teachers keep children's mouths happy and healthy:

Health & Diet:

- Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem – more common than cancer or heart disease
- There are 11 million newly decayed teeth each year
- How you can modify your child's diet to help prevent tooth decay:
 - ⇒ Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious, healthy meals and snacks, especially those rich in calcium and low in acids and sugars
 - ⇒ Drink plenty of tap water – especially if fluoridated
 - ⇒ Monitor intake of sugary foods including soft drinks, sports drinks and lollies

Playing Safe:

- Mouthguards help keep dental injuries to a minimum, particularly when playing contact sports. All children playing contact sports should wear a mouthguard
- Professionally fitted mouthguards are comfortable, allow speech and do not restrict breathing
- Mouthguard Tips:
 - ⇒ See your dentist to have a customised mouthguard fitted
 - ⇒ Wear your mouthguard at training and during the game
 - ⇒ Update your mouthguard every 12-18 months, to ensure it is fully effective
 - ⇒ Keep your mouthguard clean, stored in a rigid container and away from heat to ensure it maintains its shape
 - ⇒ Avoid do-it-yourself 'boil and fit' type mouthguards that are unlikely to provide as effective protection
- If a tooth is knocked out, these steps should be followed:
 - ⇒ Remain calm, find the tooth, handle it by the crown only and ensure it's clean
 - ⇒ If the root is dirty, gently suck the tooth, rinse it in milk or very briefly in water
 - ⇒ Immediately replant tooth in the socket (to maximise the chance of effective reimplantation this should ideally not be delayed beyond 30 minutes)
 - ⇒ Hold tooth in place
 - ⇒ If you are unable to replant the tooth, keep the tooth moist by submerging it in milk, sealing it in plastic wrap, or placing it in the patient's mouth, next to the cheek, then
 - ⇒ **Seek Immediate Dental Treatment- Time is Critical**

DO NOT

- Hold the tooth by the root surface
- Scrape or rub the root surface
- Let the tooth dry out
- Rinse or store the tooth in water for more than a second or two

Losing Baby Teeth:

- From the age of 6 years, baby teeth start to become 'wobbly' and fall out to make way for adult teeth. It is perfectly normal for a child to lose their first tooth up to a year or two earlier or later than this age
- Girls generally lose teeth earlier than boys, and generally the first tooth to fall out is one in the lower front of the mouth
- Suggestions on handling children's fear and pain of losing teeth:
 - ⇒ While losing a first tooth excites some children, many are fearful of the experience. Reassure your child that losing baby teeth is a natural process and new adult teeth will come in their place
 - ⇒ A cold compress or over-the-counter, anti-inflammatory painkiller may help relieve loose tooth pain. **Please consult your dentist or pharmacist for painkiller recommendations**
 - ⇒ Although some children experience little or no discomfort while losing their teeth, it's normal for gums to be tender and bleed a little

Oral Care and Maintenance:

- It is important to brush gently and thoroughly as soon as teeth erupt. No toothpaste should be used until children are aged two years. A low content fluoride toothpaste should be used for children aged between two and seven years, brushing with a soft compact head toothbrush at least twice a day after meals
- Flossing should be included in daily oral care routines
- Flossing for children should be started as soon as two teeth erupt next to each other.
- Flossing is more important for the back teeth (i.e. molars) because they are generally closer together than the front teeth
- Flossing a child's teeth can be a challenge, but if you make a game of it, your child is more likely to cooperate
- Children who visit the dentist regularly from an early age are much less likely to experience dental problems during their childhood and are unlikely to experience a future fear of dentists.