



BORN TO LOSE ... FIRST TEETH

Kids' teeth—paying special attention to them lays a firm foundation for a lifetime of healthy teeth.

They're milestones in your child's development, those first teeth. You mark the date in the baby book when the first baby tooth works its way through the gum. You record the day when that first loose tooth lets go, leaving an oh-so-cute gap in the grin and a bit of change beneath the pillow.

But you can't ignore the care of baby teeth on the grounds that when these are gone new ones will replace them.

1 The care you give those little mouths will pay off big time down the road. These days we believe straightening should begin while kids still have some of their baby teeth. If we build the dental framework early, growing teeth won't crowd together or twist. Braces, if needed, come off sooner.



Never Too Young to Learn

Before those tiny teeth even begin to surface, begin the habit of rubbing baby's gums with a dry wash cloth after every feeding. Continue as the teeth emerge, until the child is old enough to learn to brush. Give them help and encouragement in those early awkward attempts at brushing. Bringing them in for dental exams early—say age 3—lets us make friends before they decide we're the enemy.

An ounce of prevention is worth an ounce of fluoride.

That may not be the exact formula, but if your kids are drinking unfluoridated water at home, you should consider a fluoride toothpaste or a fluoride treatment in our office.

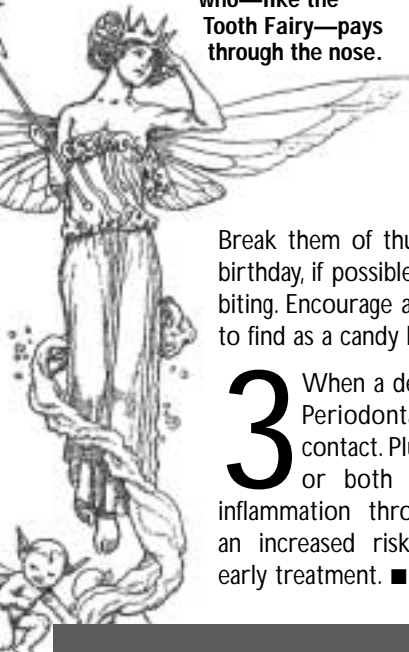
2 The habits you help your child to develop can last throughout their lives. Teach kids HOW to brush and WHEN, after every meal and snack. Have them wear mouthguards for sports.

Break them of thumb sucking before their fifth birthday, if possible, and then go to work on nail biting. Encourage a taste for healthful snacks by making carrot sticks as easy to find as a candy bar, and buy only sugar-free gum.

3 When a dentist spots problems early, they can be nipped in the bud. Periodontal disease can be spread by long-term intimate contact. Plus, children can inherit a predisposition toward it from one or both parents. It's an infectious disease which can spread inflammation throughout the body, and researchers have linked it to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Early detection means early treatment. ■



Loss Lore
The Tooth Fairy is the best known, but there are other myths associated with the loss of a baby tooth. In some regions of the United States, they place the tooth in a corn cob and throw it over the house. In Canada they throw the tooth in a mouse hole. In Germany, the tooth goes into the oven for the Oven Man, who—like the Tooth Fairy—pays through the nose.

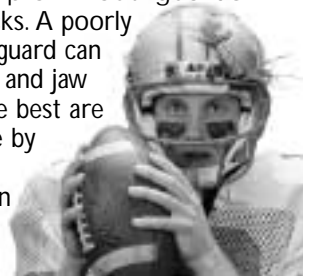


Protect Your Kids 8 Ways

Simon says: Take these eight steps toward greater child safety. Here's how to fend off some of the most common childhood mishaps!

1 Prevent decay. If your family drinks only bottled or home-filtered water, ask your dentist about fluoridation treatments.

2 Don't scrimp on mouthguards for junior jocks. A poorly fitting mouthguard can lead to teeth and jaw problems. The best are custom made by your dentist for protection and comfort.



3 Slather sunscreen. Exposure to sunlight causes most melanomas. Protection reduces the risk.

4 Think twice about baby aspirin. During or after a viral illness, it increases the chance of Reye's Syndrome, liver and brain damage. Ask your pediatrician.

5 Vaccinate. Infant immunizations have reduced many once-common diseases to virtual extinction. Protect your family against measles, mumps, rubella, and chicken pox.



7 Early orthodontic exams. Buck teeth, crowded teeth, and overbites can all be treated best when tackled before the adult teeth come in. That ounce of prevention can be worth a pretty pound.

6 Avoid head injuries. The best helmet is comfortable, adjustable, and looks so cool it'll be worn everywhere.

8 Buckle 'em up. Children are safest in the back center seat, in seats designed for their size. ■