



**Tips for your health and wellness because healthier happens together™.**

## Oral health tips for children and teens

It's never too soon to teach your child good oral health habits. Good oral hygiene can lead to healthy teeth, gums, tongue – and a lifetime of happy smiles.

### The first trip to the dentist

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends every child see the dentist when their first tooth appears or by their first birthday. This first trip to the dentist could be scary for your child. Try some of these tips to put your child at ease:

- Schedule a pre-appointment meeting with your child's dentist.
- Schedule the appointment in the morning after your child has had a good night's sleep.
- Use terms your child can understand. Explain to your child that cavities are holes in their teeth and that the dentist is going to check their mouth to make sure they don't have any.
- Try role-playing with your child as "dentist" and "patient" or read a story together about going to the dentist.

### During the visit, the dentist will:

- Ask about your child's medical history, brushing routine, eating habits and diet.
- Look in your child's mouth for signs of injury or tooth decay/cavities.
- Clean your child's teeth and provide tips for daily care like managing teething, thumb sucking or pacifier use.



#### Oral health in children and adolescents

Many snacks children and adolescents eat can be harmful to their dental health. Encourage children to drink fluoridated water and eat vegetables, plain yogurt, fruits and cheese.



**Aetna Better Health<sup>®</sup>  
of Illinois**

## Tips for children younger than three years old:

- Begin dental hygiene as soon as possible. Before teeth appear, a baby's mouth should be cleaned twice a day (after first feeding and before bed) by wiping the gums with a clean washcloth to remove bacteria and sugar.
- Avoid putting a baby to bed with a bottle of milk. Milk or juices can pool around teeth and cause severe decay.
- Brush regularly. Once teeth come in, a baby's teeth should be brushed twice a day with a small, soft-bristled toothbrush and water.
- Check when it's okay to use toothpaste. Talk to a dentist or pediatrician about using fluoride-based toothpaste and receiving a fluoride application on a baby's teeth.
- When your child has two teeth that touch, you should begin cleaning between their teeth daily.



## Tips for children 3—6 years old

- Brush your child's teeth twice a day (or as told by your dentist) with a child-size toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush properly. Children should take their time and use gentle, circular motions as well as gently brush their tongue.
- Don't forget to floss. Flossing once a day is a great way to stimulate the gums and reduce plaque.
- Consider using mouthwash. Mouthwash can help reduce acid in the mouth, clean hard-to-brush areas and strengthen the teeth. A dentist can provide specific mouthwash recommendations for children.
- Toothpaste should not be swallowed. Be sure your child is old enough to rinse their mouth with water and spit.

## Tips for teens:

- Your child's dentist or primary care physician (PCP) may recommend fluoride varnish or tablets as an additional oral health disease preventive treatment.
- Encourage your teen to brush twice a day with toothpaste and to floss.
- Use properly fitted mouth guards to prevent injury if your teen plays a sport.
- Ask your dentist about dental sealants for your teenager. They provide an extra layer of protection against cavities on the chewing surfaces of back teeth.

### Haven't been to the dentist lately?

We're here to help. Contact Member Services at **1-866-329-4701 (TTY: 711)** for help scheduling an appointment with a dental provider in your area. Your dentist can provide more oral health care tips and can answer your questions.

Aetna complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

English: ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-866-329-4701 (TTY: 711). Spanish: ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-866-329-4701 (TTY: 711). Polish: UWAGA: Jeżeli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Zadzwoń pod numer 1-866-329-4701 (TTY: 711). Aetna Better Health of Illinois is part of the CVS Health® family of companies.

Aetna is the brand name used for products and services provided by one or more of the Aetna group of companies, including Aetna Life Insurance Company and its affiliates (Aetna). Talk to your doctor first about whether this is right for you.