

## Protecting Your Child's Teeth

February is [National Children's Dental Health Month](#), a reminder that the dental habits that kids learn early on are important to maintain good oral health for the rest of their lives. The American Dental Association recommends that children see a dentist when their first tooth comes in, or by their first birthday and usually, every six months thereafter.

A positive attitude toward visiting the dentist can be encouraged in young children when parents are relaxed and don't share their fears or anxieties about any negative dental experiences they may have had in the past. Dentistry has come a long way, and pediatric dentists are trained to work with young children and children with special needs.

### Preventing Cavities

Cavities, also known as dental caries, are the most common oral disease in children. You can reduce your child's risk of tooth decay by:



- Teaching your child to brush his/her teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, and flossing. (For children under 2 years of age, don't use fluoride toothpaste unless your doctor or dentist advises it)
- Limiting sugary foods, candies, and drinks. Sugar can erode enamel and result in cavities, even in young children. This is the reason parents are advised not to let their baby [fall asleep with a bottle](#), unless it only contains water.
- Scheduling regular dental visits.

Dental sealants for children ages 5 to 14 can also be helpful in preventing cavities. Sealants are a thin, plastic coating applied on the first permanent back molars. The procedure is usually fast, pain-free, and can last for five to ten years.

### Dental Emergencies

Keep the dentist's after hours/emergency number in your contacts. Accidents happen, and kids can break a tooth or have a tooth knocked out. Re-implantation of a tooth that has been knocked out is possible if done early enough after the injury. For severe toothaches, call the dentist and follow instructions for pain relief until the toothache can be evaluated.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in addiction recovery services, primary care, or mental health care for children or adults, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.

