

# The Importance of Good Oral Health During the Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has meant delays in dental care for many families. Children whose dental problems might have been easily taken care of in an office setting may have had to wait to see a dentist. And since teeth don't get better on their own, those problems just get worse and need even more treatment.

Taking a little time at home to practice good dental habits is a great way to protect your child's teeth during the pandemic and every day.



## Why good oral health is important during Covid-19

Tooth decay in the form of cavities (</English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Teething-and-Dental-Hygiene.aspx>) (also called caries) is the most common disease of childhood. It is mostly preventable. But once tooth decay begins, it will get worse—even in babies (</English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx>). Dentists were not able to see patients at the beginning of the pandemic except for emergencies. As they begin re-opening with new schedules, it may be more difficult to get an appointment. If you need help finding a dentist, talk to your pediatrician.

## How to help prevent dental problems during the pandemic:

- **Brush teeth regularly.** Help your children brush their teeth (</English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Toothbrushing-Tips-for-Young-Children.aspx>) two times a day for two minutes each time. Use toothpaste (</English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/FAQ-Fluoride-and-Children.aspx>) with fluoride.
- **Offer fluoridated water.** Offer your child plain milk (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Recommended-Drinks-for-Young-Children-Ages-0-5.aspx>) with meals and fluoridated water (</English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Water-Fluoridation.aspx>) in between. Avoid juice (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Fruit-Juice-and-Your-Childs-Diet.aspx>), especially in sippy cups.
- **Avoid sugary foods and junk food.** Diet affects dental health. The longer and more frequently your child's teeth are exposed to sugar (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/How-to-Reduce-Added-Sugar-in-Your-Childs-Diet.aspx>) and other foods that stick in the teeth (like chips, cookies, and crackers), the greater the risk of cavities.
- **Dental checkups.** Situations vary from state to state as dental offices begin to reopen. However, they are following CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html>) and OSHA (<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/dentistry.html>) recommendations to make sure patients and dental team members stay safe. Call your dentist to learn about their new procedures for seeing patients before scheduling a visit.

## See your pediatrician

When you visit your pediatrician for a checkup (</English/family-life/health-management/Pages/Well-Child-Care-A-Check-Up-for-Success.aspx>) or even a sick visit, ask about how best to take care of your children's teeth. At in-person visits, your pediatrician may apply fluoride varnish (</English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Fluoride-Varnish-What-Parents-Need-to-Know.aspx>) to protect your child's teeth.

If you are not able to visit the office, your pediatrician may be able to offer a telehealth visit to "look" at your child's mouth and teeth using photos or video. Depending on what is seen, you may need to take your child to a dentist.

## Remember

Talk with your pediatrician about making a "dental home"—a dentist who can give ongoing, high-quality professional care—just as you have a "medical home" with your pediatrician. As dental offices continue to open in many communities, you can return to regular dental visits to keep your child's dental health on track.

## More Information

- [Brush, Book, Bed: How to Structure your Child's Nighttime Routine \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brush-Book-Bed.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brush-Book-Bed.aspx)
- [Brushing Up on Oral Health: Never Too Early to Start \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx)
- [Dental Health and Hygiene for Young Children \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Teething-and-Dental-Hygiene.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Teething-and-Dental-Hygiene.aspx)
- [Diet Tips to Prevent Dental Problems \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Diet-Tips-to-Prevent-Dental-Problems.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Diet-Tips-to-Prevent-Dental-Problems.aspx)
- [Let the Brushing Games Begin \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Let-the-Brushing-Games-Begin.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Let-the-Brushing-Games-Begin.aspx)
- [Oral Health Challenges for Children with Disabilities \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Oral-Health-Challenges-for-Children-with-Disabilities.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Oral-Health-Challenges-for-Children-with-Disabilities.aspx)
- [Water Fluoridation \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Water-Fluoridation.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Water-Fluoridation.aspx)

## About Dr. Kimball



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## About Dr. Tate



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