

Looking After Your Child's Teeth



Your child will start losing their baby teeth from around the time they turn six. By the time they are 12 years old they should have all their adult teeth, except for their wisdom teeth which come when your child reaches their early to mid-20s.

As adult teeth don't get replaced, it is more important than ever that you encourage and help your child look after their teeth.

Celebrating each time your child's baby teeth falls out is a great way of reassuring your child that losing a baby tooth is normal. (With adult teeth, it's a different story.)

Showing your child how to care for their teeth helps them develop good oral hygiene habits for life.

What more can you do?

By now, your child is probably already brushing their own teeth, though they may still need your help. Teaching them how to brush their teeth and supervising their teeth-brushing routine may continue until your child is around 8 years old.

When your child's adult teeth start coming through, you should:

- continue giving your child healthy foods to eat. A healthy diet is as important as correctly brushing your child's teeth and keeping them clean
- maintain your child's teeth-brushing routine – they should brush their teeth every morning and every night – being gentle or careful around any loose baby tooth
- allow the loose baby tooth to fall out on its own. If you try and pull a baby tooth before its ready to fall out it can snap and this can lead to infection.

Keeping your child's teeth clean

- Use a child's toothbrush that has soft bristles of different heights.
- Encourage your child to brush their teeth while looking into a mirror so they can see what they are doing...and so can you.
- Encourage your child to angle the toothbrush towards their gums, moving it in gentle circles.

See:

- Raising Children Network's: [Children's teeth and how to brush them](#)
- Better Health Channel's: [Teeth care](#)

Dental checks

Your child should visit a dentist regularly. Your child can receive professional dental care either from your family dentist or through Victoria's public oral health service. All children under 12 years old are eligible for this service which provides check-ups, advice and treatments from community-based dental clinics. See: [Dental Health Services Victoria](#) – for more information about this service, or telephone 1300 360 054 to find a clinic location near you.

Thumb or finger sucking

While most children stop sucking their thumb or fingers by the time they are four years old, some continue well beyond this age. If your child continues to suck their thumb or fingers once their adult teeth show, permanent dental problems can occur. There are several things you can do to encourage and support your child to stop thumb sucking. See: Better Health Channel's [Dental care - thumb sucking](#) for more information.

Teeth grinding

Teeth-grinding is pretty common for children in Prep. Some children clench their jaws quite firmly; in other children you may hear them grinding their teeth. Your child may grind their teeth while they sleep. Most teeth-grinding doesn't last and it doesn't cause your child's teeth any damage. But if it continues, you should talk to your family dentist or doctor, especially if your child is experiencing headaches, tooth or jaw pain, or if your child's teeth are wearing down as a result of their teeth-grinding.