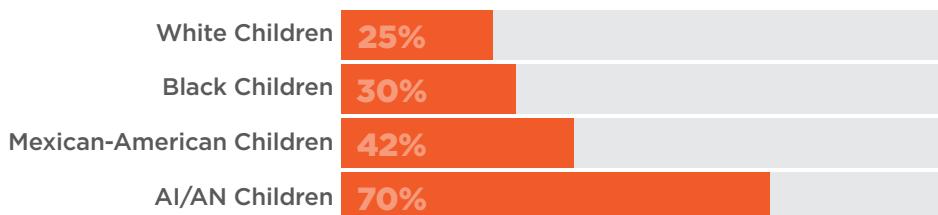


Ways to prevent tooth decay in babies, toddlers and preschoolers

OUR COMMUNITY

Preschool children in American Indian and Alaska Native communities are **disproportionately affected** by poor oral health.

Percentage of Children Under the Age of 5 Who Have Had Cavities:



Here are Some Steps You Can Take to Care for Your Child's Teeth and Mouth:



It starts in pregnancy!

When you're pregnant, you may be more prone to cavities and gum disease. That's why every pregnant woman needs to see her dentist. Make an appointment early in the pregnancy, well before the baby comes. (You'll be busy afterwards!)



Once your baby arrives...

- Wipe your baby's gums after each feeding and before bedtime.
- Ask your baby's doctor to check inside their mouth.
- Your doctor should recommend that you take your baby to the dentist around their 1st birthday.
- Breastfeed infants during the first year of life and beyond as long as both mother and baby desire it.



Baby (primary) teeth matter!

- As soon as your baby has a tooth, begin to clean it with a soft toothbrush with a smear of fluoride toothpaste – the size of a grain of rice – twice a day. Your baby's first tooth should come in between the first 6 and 12 months .
- Make brushing teeth part of the morning and bedtime routine.
- Don't dip pacifiers in honey or sugar to avoid cavities.
- Switch from a bottle to a sippy cup around age 1, and don't put your baby to bed with a bottle. Only put **breast milk, formula or water** in the bottle.

- Give children under 4 years old no more than 4 ounces of juice a day. Babies under 6 months get no juice, only breast milk or formula.
- Try not to share forks, spoons or foods that have been in your mouth to avoid sharing germs
- Use fluoride toothpaste, the size of a grain of rice until the age of 3 and be sure to brush twice a day.
- Once your child turns 3, increase fluoride toothpaste to the size of a pea, and teach them to spit, not swallow.



Fluoride Prevents Cavities

The whole family benefits from using fluoride toothpaste and drinking water with fluoride, a mineral that helps prevent cavities. As soon as teeth come in, ask your baby's doctor or dentist about fluoride. If your water does not contain enough fluoride, they may recommend painting your children's teeth with fluoride varnish or suggest vitamins with fluoride. Fluoride varnish makes teeth stronger and is safe for babies and children.



Help your kids eat a healthy diet

- Include fresh fruits or vegetables at meals whenever you can.
- Limit sugary snacks and candy by offering fruit instead.
- Replace starchy snacks like pretzels and chips by offering veggies or cheese instead.
- Avoid snacking on candy, cookies, or chips!



Water is best!

Sugary drinks are behind the rise in children with diabetes (high blood sugar) and unhealthy weight. Water is all-around good for your health!

Tap Water

Most tap water contains fluoride, but most bottled water does not. If you have questions about your tap water, contact your local, county, or state health department to learn about the amount of fluoride in your tap water.

Well Water

Well water should be tested regularly to ensure it is safe to drink. At the same time, it can be tested to make sure it does not have too much or too little fluoride. Testing is available through most state or county public health departments.

(Source: Phipps KR, Ricks TL, Mork NP, and Lozon TL. The oral health of American Indian and Alaska Native children aged 1-5 years: results of the 2018-19 HIS oral health survey. Indian Health Service data brief. Rockville, MD: Indian Health Service. 2019.)


Kids learn by watching the people around them.
Show them that you brush your teeth,
drink water, and eat healthy foods, too!

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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