



## **Brush Up on Healthy Teeth!** *Keeping Your Child's Teeth Healthy*

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According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, nearly 50 percent of children have tooth decay before age 5. Because young children's teeth are very important for eating and speaking clearly, helping a child maintain a proper dental health care routine is key to his or her overall development. First 5 San Joaquin encourages parents and caregivers to begin taking care of children's teeth and gums early on with the following helpful tips.

- Gently wipe your baby's gums with a clean, wet cloth after each feeding.
- As soon as your child's first tooth comes in, begin brushing every day.
- Brush your toddler's teeth for him or her until he or she is 6 years old.
- Visit the dentist when the child's first tooth comes in, and every year after that for a check-up.
- Look for toothbrushes with soft bristles that are gentle on gums. To make brushing more fun, use a brightly colored toothbrush. Ask your child to roar like a tiger to help open his or her mouth wide!
- Ask a dentist or doctor if it's okay to use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste once a child is 2 or 3 years old. Supervise and teach your child to spit out toothpaste and rinse after brushing.
- Floss teeth as soon as they grow and begin to touch each other — usually when a child is about 4 years old.
- Monitor what your child eats, as it can affect his or her dental health. Avoid candy and sugary drinks like soda that can cause cavities.
- Prevent tooth decay by not letting your child suck on a bottle or sippy cup filled with milk or juice for a long time. If he or she needs a bottle at bedtime, fill it with water.

By practicing good dental habits early in a child's life and visiting the dentist regularly, parents can help keep children's teeth healthy and their smiles sparkling!

For more information about oral health care for children age 5 or younger, contact First 5 San Joaquin at (209) 953-5437 or [www.sjckids.org](http://www.sjckids.org) and [www.first5california.com/parents](http://www.first5california.com/parents).

### **About First 5 San Joaquin**

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 San Joaquin distributes approximately \$15 million in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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