

## Tips For Preventing Tooth Decay

### REGULAR DENTAL VISITS

Regular dental visits are important for preventing tooth decay and for spotting other problems sooner - when the treatment is simpler and less expensive. During these visits the dentist will do an examination - checking the teeth and gums and screening for oral cancer. The dental hygienist will also check the teeth and gums and clean them. You'll learn what you need to do at home to keep your mouth healthy. Most people visit the dental office two times each year, but the dentist and dental hygienist may suggest something different based on the individual's personal needs.

### SCHOOL-BASED ORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

These programs offer dental care to the students in the school during the school day. Most programs offer dental sealants and fluoride to prevent tooth decay. If any dental problems are seen, a note is sent home asking that the child see the dentist for follow-up care. In Nevada, dental hygienists provide the dental care in the schools. Ask your child's school nurse or teacher if their school has one of these programs.

#### Throw away your toothbrush when...

1. The bristles are frayed and worn; or
2. You have been sick; or
3. The toothbrush is 3 months old.



## ABOUT US

**Oral Health Nevada Inc.** is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that champions the dental health of all Nevadans whether they are living in our largest cities or in our most rural communities. We believe that access to appropriate and affordable dental care should not be a privilege because of income or where in the state a person lives – dental health is something that each Nevadan should be able to choose.

**Our Vision...** Empowering all Nevadans to have the best oral health possible.

**We believe** that preventing oral diseases begins with knowledge from credible sources. To help the residents of Nevada we have developed a website that includes useful resources including easy-to-understand fact sheets, videos and podcasts on many oral health care topics for infants, children, adults and seniors. We've also developed the *Nevada Oral Health Resource Guide*, which includes information on where no cost or low cost dental care may be found in our state. We invite you to visit our website today and often.

### ORAL HEALTH NEVADA INC.

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## TIPS FOR A HEALTHY MOUTH

A Healthy Mouth Makes A Happy Child



[www.OralHealthNevada.com](http://www.OralHealthNevada.com)

## Why is Dental Health For Children Important?

Healthy teeth and gums are more important than you may think! In fact, not only does poor dental health affect a child's ability to eat and digest food, sleep, and speak properly, it also negatively impacts their self-esteem, and their ability to concentrate and learn. Research has shown that dental health impacts general health and well-being. Many diseases like diabetes and heart disease can be negatively impacted by poor oral health.

**The good news...  
Most dental diseases are preventable!**

You knew that tooth decay (cavities) could be prevented, right? But, did you know the bacteria (germs) that cause tooth decay could be shared from one person to another? That's why it is important to not share your toothbrush. Tooth decay starts after eating or drinking something with starch or sugar. Bacteria in the mouth "eat" these carbohydrates, which allow them to grow and collect together on the tooth. This collection of bacteria is called dental plaque. The bacteria in dental plaque continue to eat carbohydrates and produce acids. These acids weaken the tooth and a hole, or a "cavity," is formed.

## Tips for Preventing Tooth Decay

**Tooth decay can be prevented by following five important steps.**

### TOOTHBRUSHING

Mechanically remove the plaque bacteria with a **SOFT** bristled toothbrush every morning and before bedtime - brushing for 2 minutes each time.

Begin cleaning a baby's gums and teeth at about 3 months of age - at first with a soft cloth and with a small, soft toothbrush when the first tooth erupts.

Until about age 8, children need adult supervision and assistance in order to brush safely, correctly, and thoroughly.

### DENTAL SEALANTS

A dental sealant is a thin plastic material placed on the pits and fissures of the chewing or biting surfaces of teeth. Since tooth decay usually starts in the deep pits and fissures, dental sealants can cover them up and keep decay-causing bacteria and food away. Resin-based dental sealants can be 100 percent effective at preventing tooth decay if they stay on the tooth's top surface. Sealants may also stop the growth of tooth decay, and could prevent the need for expensive dental fillings.



**TOOTH WITH A SEALANT**

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### FLUORIDE

Everyone should regularly drink fluoridated water and use fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride strengthens the teeth and prevents tooth decay for everyone, not just children.

**Children under 3 years of age**

**should:** 1. Use a small **smear** of fluoride toothpaste; 2. Spit it all out in the sink; and 3. Do **NOT** rinse with water after brushing.

**Children 3 years of age and older**

**should:** 1. Use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste; 2. Spit it all out in the sink; and 3. Rinsing with water should be kept to a minimum.



**SMEAR      PEA**

### EATING HEALTHY

Decrease the number of times per day foods/drinks high in sugar and carbohydrates are eaten. Choosing fresh fruit instead of fruit rollups, water instead of soda, and popsicles instead of candy or potato chips will help to prevent tooth decay. Other healthy snacks include: yogurt, popcorn, ice cream, nuts, carrots and other fresh vegetables. Sugar-free chewing gum containing xylitol will help to prevent tooth decay, too.