

# 12 Tips to Help Children Build Positive Dental Habits at Home

It's not always easy to teach children good dental care habits. However, it's so important to build a good oral hygiene routine with your children so they'll carry these habits into adulthood. You will help them prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and the need for dental treatments.

If you're struggling to keep your kids on track when it comes to dental habits at home, here are some tips from our pediatric dentists:

## 1. Start a Dental Routine As Early As Possible

The earlier you start to develop an oral hygiene routine with your kids, the better! Even as babies, your children can benefit from watching parents or older siblings brush their teeth. To start, use a baby toothbrush and child-safe toothpaste to gently brush your baby's teeth. You can also use a wet washcloth to clean your baby's gums before the baby teeth grow. Introducing your kids to these habits early will make it less challenging to try and implement later.

## 2. Try a Special Toothbrush

Making your kid's dental hygiene routine fun will make it easier for them to stay on track. Look for toothbrushes that feature their favorite colors or have fun designs. You can also choose an electronic toothbrush designed for kids that feature fun characters or animals. Involve your kids in choosing their own toothbrushes. That will give them something to look forward to and help them feel more excited about brushing their teeth.

## 3. Choose a Brushing Song

When it comes to oral hygiene at home, timing is important. According to the [American Dental Association \(ADA\)](#), people should ideally brush twice a day for two minutes each time. To make sure your kids are brushing for the full two minutes, you can pick one of their favorite songs that's about that length to sing or play while they brush their teeth. Once the song is over, they'll know they brushed for the right amount of time.

## 4. Share Brushing Books or Videos With Your Kids

To help your kids understand why brushing and flossing are essential, you can share books or videos on this subject. There are plenty of creative and engaging videos you can find online that go over the proper ways to brush and why kids need to do it. You can also try reading books to them about brushing their teeth and visiting the dentist. It will help to expose them to a good dental routine early on.

## 5. Use Positive Reinforcement Methods at Home

Children are rarely ever self-motivated to practice good oral hygiene. If you can make brushing a rewarding activity, children generally respond well to a type of structured system that involves positive reinforcement for good behavior. It could be something as simple as a star chart on a calendar where your kids get a sticker every time they brush their teeth before and after bed.

You can get even more creative and offer little incentives every time your children remember to brush their teeth without having to be reminded, such as an extra bedtime story. It's really up to you to make at-home oral hygiene a more positive experience for your kids, but it will help them build the essential dental habits needed for healthy teeth and gums throughout their lives.

## 6. Take Your Child With You to Appointments

It's important for children to see that going to a dental appointment is routine and just a part of life. The more they're exposed to it and see you relaxed during the appointment, the more positive their feelings will be towards it. If your child has questions about the dentist and what to expect, this is an easy way for them to see and experience it with you.

Of course, use your discretion when bringing your child to the dentist with you. If your appointment happens to be for a root canal or another procedure that involves numbing the mouth or has the potential to take a while, you may want to start off with a more routine service, such as teeth cleaning.

## 7. Use a Reward System

To help motivate your kids to keep up with their oral hygiene routine at home, many parents find it useful to have a type of rewards system. You can create a chart where your kids add gold star stickers every time they remember to brush on their own. Maybe promise a weekend trip to their favorite park or restaurant if they don't fuss about daily brushing or flossing that week.

You know your kids best, so find something that will keep them motivated and feeling good about their dental habits.

## 8. Make an Art Project

Using art as a way to learn about dental hygiene is fun and exciting, especially for younger kids. Having a hands-on and visual representation can help them understand why brushing is important. For example:

1. Draw a big tooth or full smile on a large piece of paper or poster board.
2. Using yellow paint or a marker, make stains on the teeth that your kids can easily see.
3. Have your kids paint over the stains with white paint while explaining that brushing and flossing can get your teeth clean and white just like that.

## 9. Choose Different Toothpaste Flavors

Kid-safe toothpaste is available in several flavors, including bubble gum, strawberry, watermelon, chocolate, and more. If your child doesn't seem to like one flavor, try a different one. Giving your kids more appealing options will help keep them open to practicing good oral hygiene.

## 10. Do Your Dental Routine Together

Again, it always helps kids to see their parents and older siblings brushing and flossing their teeth. If you model good dental habits for them, they're much more likely to adopt these habits naturally as part of their own routine. If your children are reluctant to brush their teeth, try doing it together. It will also allow you to monitor their techniques and make sure they're doing everything the right way.

## 11. Avoid Sugary Foods and Drinks

It's also essential to teach your kids that sugary foods and beverages can lead to cavities if they're not careful. Try to avoid offering your children options that are high in sugar or could be damaging to their teeth. It's a great habit to build early, and one that will benefit them in many ways—not just their dental health.

## 12. Talk About Visiting the Dentist

It's good to talk about visiting the dentist to prepare and remind your kids of what to expect during their next cleaning. A lot of kids feel anxious about the dentist and need a little encouragement from their parents. There are many ways you can help your kids feel less scared about dental visits, including talking to them and understanding why they're afraid. Dental visits will be easier for you and your children if they feel confident and prepared.

## Kids and Dental Hygiene Routines

As a parent, it can be discouraging when your kids protest and refuse to build good dental habits at home. Just remember, you're not alone! It's normal for children to object to brushing or flossing. However, it's up to you to help them adopt positive dental habits and practice good oral hygiene on a regular basis.

Try these tips from our dental experts and stick with them. It will quickly become part of your kids' routine to help them have a strong and healthy smile.