

Healthy Smile Healthy Child

Kia ora koutou,

Did you know the development of teeth starts when a baby is in the womb? At birth, a baby has a full set of 20 primary (also known as deciduous) teeth hidden under their gums! Teeth are important for chewing food, forming sounds and speaking clearly, and baby teeth hold space for adult (permanent) teeth too.

Practising good dental care in early life can help your tamariki to prevent tooth decay (holes), gum disease, the forming of plaque (a sticky film of bacteria on teeth), and keep their smiles beautiful 😊



Here are some tips to help you to care for your child's teeth:

- Start caring for baby's teeth as soon as they start to come through. This includes **brushing twice a day** with a soft toothbrush. Once in the morning after breakfast, and once before they go to sleep at night.
- Teach your child to **spit out left-over toothpaste** after brushing and not to rinse their mouth. A small amount of fluoride toothpaste left around the teeth will help to protect them.
- **Use a fluoridated toothpaste** as fluoride makes teeth stronger and more resistant to decay.
- **Lift the lip** to check for tooth decay, and take your child for **regular dental check-ups**. They are free for children in Aotearoa from birth until their 18th birthday. To enrol them (if you haven't already), call 0800 825 583.
- **Choose mostly foods which do not stick to the teeth and are low in sugar** – sugar interacts with the bacteria in our mouths to produce dietary acids that attack our teeth, making them prone to decay.
- **Drink water (and plain milk)**. Water are free, fresh, and available on tap.

Some tooth-friendly food to put in your child's lunchbox:

- Vegetable sticks like cucumber, carrots, celery, capsicum
- Corn kernels or corn on the cob, steamed or baked kumara
- Fruits (fresh, frozen, or canned in natural juice) such as kiwifruit, mandarins, banana, pears, grapes (diced in quarters for under 2 and halved for toddlers under 5). It's best to avoid dried fruits as they stick on the teeth and increase choking risk in toddlers.
- Wholegrain crackers with cheese, a sandwich, sushi, mousetraps, yoghurt, or vegetable fritters.

Vegetable Fritters

- ¼ cup flour
 - 1 egg
 - 2 tablespoon milk
 - ¼ cup grated cheese
 - ¼ cup vegetables of your choice (grated carrot, zucchini, potato, frozen peas, corn kernels)
1. Beat together flour and egg with two tablespoons of milk, until it is a reasonably thick, smooth batter (add a little more add milk if necessary).
 2. Add cheese and vegetables to mixture, combine well.
 3. Heat oil in a fry pan over medium heat. Drop tablespoon-lots of fritter mix into pan.
 4. Flip over fritters when bubbles appear on top and bottom is golden.
 5. Serve hot or cold

Ngā mihi nui,
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