

DENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE GUIDE

Preschool through 2nd Grade

and

3rd Grade through 5th Grade



Provided by the California Dental Association's
Council on Community Health
1201 K Street Mall
P.O. Box 13749
Sacramento, CA 95853
800-CDA-SMILE

Dear Teacher:

The California Dental Association has developed this dental health and science guide in response to frequent requests from many teachers throughout California. We feel it is vitally important that young children understand the importance of good oral health and preventive dental care. We join you in the concerns voiced by your profession regarding the impact of poor dental health on children's education.

This guide is divided into two parts. One portion focuses on dental health education for preschool through 2nd grade. The second portion focuses on 3rd grade through 5th grade. Each section contains goals and objectives in addition to age appropriate games and puzzles. We hope you find these tools a valuable supplement to your curriculum.

The members of the California Dental Association recognize and appreciate the role teachers play in improving the lives of our children.

Should you have any suggestions or feedback which may assist us in improving this guide, please contact Gayle Mathe, RDH at 800-736-7071, extension 4995 or at gayle.mathe@cda.org.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your local component dental society or the California Dental Association at 800-CDA-SMILE.

**Dental Health Education Resource
Preschool through 2nd Grade**

DENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE

Preschool through 2nd Grade:

Objectives & Activities

1. To assist young children to understand the importance of their teeth.
2. To assist young children to understand the importance of health teeth.
3. To assist young children to understand why it is important to see their family dentist.

Games and Puzzles:

Key dental vocabulary

The Good and the Bad (2nd graders)

National Children's Dental Health Month Calendar

Age appropriate coloring pages with dental health messages

3rd Grade through 5th Grade:

Objectives & Activities

1. To assist children to understand the importance of good oral health
2. To educate children on what causes tooth decay
3. To encourage daily oral care at home and to see a dentist regularly

Games and Puzzles:

Key dental vocabulary

What is the Secret Word

Fill-in the Blank

The Good and the Bad (3rd graders)

Vocabulary Word Search Puzzle

Can You Figure Out the Secret Dental Code

National Children's Dental Health Month Calendar

Age appropriate coloring pages with dental health messages

Additional Resource Materials:

Letter to Parents

Dental Health Fact Sheets

Dental Health Education Resource for Preschool through 2nd Grade

Objectives:

1. To assist young children in understanding the importance of their teeth.
2. To assist young children in understanding the importance of healthy teeth.
3. To assist young children in understanding why it is important to see their family dentist.

Objective 1 Activities:

Display pictures from magazines that show people smiling, eating, talking, etc.

Ask the class what the people in the pictures are doing with their mouths.

Ask the class what these people would look like if they didn't have teeth and couldn't smile.

Ask the class to say the words "teeth" and "toothbrush." Then ask them to say the words without their tongues touching their teeth.

Ask each student: What is your favorite food? Make a list of some of the favorite foods.

Ask the class which of these foods could be eaten without teeth. Which ones must be chewed.

Ask the class how many of them brush and floss their teeth each day. Ask them how many of them have been to a dentist. Ask how many of them know what decay is.

Objective 2 Activities:

Ask the class about some of the things they can do to keep your teeth clean.

Ask the class why it is important to keep their teeth clean.

Explain to the class that some germs in their mouth stick to teeth. This is called plaque. Plaque is hard to see. It is almost invisible. Plaque can cause decay (a little hole in the tooth), so we want to keep plaque away by brushing and flossing.

Explain to the class that they should brush their teeth in the morning and at night.

Ask the class how many of them brush and floss their teeth each day.

Show the class the proper way to brush. Brushing should be done gently, in little circles, getting to all sides of the teeth. Remind the students that they may need to have an adult help them floss since it can sometimes be difficult. Demonstrate proper flossing techniques.

Remind the class that they should only use a small amount of fluoride toothpaste (about the size of a pea). They should always spit out the paste after brushing and rinse their mouths with water.

Objective 3 Activities:

Ask the class how many of them have been to see a dentist.

Ask the class who else was at the dentist's office. Possible responses: Dental hygienist, dental assistant, receptionist.

Explain that each of these individuals is a dental helper. They help people keep their teeth clean and their smiles pretty.

Ask why it is important to see a dentist regularly.

Sing the following song (to the tune of "Row, Row, Row, Your Boat") with the class.

*Brush, brush, brush your teeth, brush them every day.
Right, left, up, down, clean the plaque away.*

*Brush, brush, brush your teeth, brush them every day.
Front, back, take off the plaque, now we smile all day.*

Ask the class to draw a picture of a happy smile.

Complete some of the dental health games or puzzles.

KEY DENTAL VOCABULARY

(Pre-school - 2nd grade)

tooth

enamel

bacteria (tooth bugs or germs)

sugar

floss

toothbrush

toothpaste

healthy

decay ("cavities")

dentist

hygienist

dental assistant

gums

sweets

checkup

smile

plaque

Dudley

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Color the squares that help you live a happy and healthy life.
Write in one good and one bad thing in the squares provided.

brush your teeth	smoke cigarettes	eat sticky candy
be nasty	visit the dentist	do your homework
play with friends	yell at people	take drugs
GOOD	smile	help your teacher
get lots of sleep	fight	pick up trash
hit a playmate	recycle paper	laugh
breathe clean air	say something nice	chew tobacco
make your bed	steal money	do your chores
floss your teeth	BAD	recycle cans



**February is National
Children's Dental Health
Month.**

Put a star in the box each day
you brush and floss your teeth.
A month full of stars means
you are keeping your smile
healthy. Awesome job!

February

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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**Healthy smiles
are out of
this world! SM**

DUDLEY THE DINOSAUR SAYS:

- ➊ brush and floss each day
- ➋ eat nutritious foods
- ➌ visit your dentist regularly

ADA.

Get on the Path to a Healthy Smile



Brush and Floss Each Day

Dental Health Education Resource
3rd Grade through 5th Grade

Dental Health Education Resource for 3rd Grade through 5th Grade

Objectives:

1. To assist children in understanding the importance of good oral health.
2. To educate children on what causes tooth decay.
3. To encourage daily oral care at home and to see a dentist regularly.

Objective 1 Activities:

Ask the class to say, " Dudley the Dinosaur visits the dentist twice a year." Now, ask them to say it again without letting their tongue touch their teeth. Let the class know that by keeping their teeth healthy they are actually helping people better understand them when they talk. Remind them that if they don't take good care of their teeth, they could fall out, or have to be removed which would make talking difficult.

Ask the class to imagine eating without having teeth. Ask them if they could eat carrots, apples, or cookies without their teeth.

Ask the class to imagine smiling without clean, healthy teeth. Ask them to draw a picture of a person without clean, healthy teeth and what they would look like when they smiled.

Objective 2 Activities:

Explain to the class that plaque is a sticky substance that forms on their teeth. Explain that if the plaque is not brushed and flossed away it can cause decay and possible tooth loss.

Explain that plaque contains bacteria that eats away at the surface of their teeth.

Explain that the best way to remove plaque from their teeth is to brush and floss at least twice a day.

Explain that when teeth are exposed to plaque for a very long time that they could start to hurt and have to be removed.

Explain that if they don't take care of their teeth that the plaque will eat away at their teeth and the only person who can fix their teeth is a dentist.

Objective 3 Activities:

Remind the class to brush and floss their teeth at least twice a day.

Show the class how to properly brush and floss their teeth. Remind them to always use toothpaste with fluoride and to only use a pea size amount on their brush. Don't forget to spit it out after brushing!

Remind the class that brushing and flossing breaks up the plaque so it can't attack their teeth. Let the class know that by using a fluoride toothpaste they are actually making their teeth stronger and more resistant to plaque build-up.

Encourage the students to go home and show an adult how to properly brush and floss. If they have a brother or sister at home, show them too.

Remind the students that they may need to have an adult help them floss since it can sometimes be difficult. But not to fear, when they are older they will be able to floss all by themselves.

Encourage the class to eat nutritious foods from all of the major food groups, such as, breads, fruits, vegetables, meat/poultry, and dairy every day.

Remind the class to limit the number of sweets and to brush and floss after each meal and snack.

Remind the class to visit their dentist for regular check-ups and teeth cleaning.

KEY DENTAL VOCABULARY

(3rd - 5th grades)

tooth
enamel
dentin
bacteria
sugar
acid
floss
toothbrush
toothpaste
fluoride
healthy
nutrition
fillings
dentist
hygienist
dental assistant
plaque
gums
sweets
checkup
smile
sealants
mouthguard
Dudley
decay
chew
molar
jaws

WHAT IS THE SECRET WORD?

Fill in the boxes with words from the word list.
Then, find the secret word and use it in a sentence.

Word List

Plaque
Tooth

Cavity
Floss

Apple
Brush

Dentist
Smiles

XXXXXXXXXX	B			S		XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
	L	A		U			
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The Secret Word is

Sample Sentence:

Yesterday I went to the dentist and had _____
placed on my back teeth to help prevent decay.

FILL-IN THE BLANK GAME

Use the following words in the sentences below.

brush	floss	molars	decay	plaque
teeth	snacks	dentist	smiling	nutritious
happy	visited	fluoride	sweet	sealants

1. It is important to limit the number of _____ snacks and eat more _____ foods.
2. The dentist said that _____ can help to strengthen the enamel on my _____.
3. Keeping my teeth healthy protects them from _____ and keeps me _____.
4. When I went to the _____ I learned how to _____ and _____.
5. When I _____ the dentist _____ were placed on my _____.
6. If I do not brush and floss to remove the sticky _____ from my teeth, and limit eating sweet _____, I can get decay.
7. A healthy smile is a _____ smile.

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Color the squares that help you live a happy and healthy life. Write in one good and one bad thing in the squares provided.

brush your teeth	smoke cigarettes	eat sticky candy
be nasty	visit the dentist	do your homework
play with friends	yell at people	take drugs
GOOD	smile	help your teacher
get lots of sleep	fight	pick up trash
hit a playmate	recycle paper	laugh
breathe clean air	get sealants	chew tobacco
make your bed	steal money	do your chores
floss your teeth	BAD	recycle cans

VOCABULARY WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

t	n	a	t	s	i	s	s	a	l	a	t	n	e	d	a	i	l	d	n	j	c	n	o
e	m	f	r	c	u	t	m	w	f	l	u	o	r	i	d	e	k	q	p	h	s	u	u
e	h	q	e	d	l	n	x	i	y	g	y	e	l	d	u	d	b	w	e	v	m	t	t
t	b	s	n	j	t	s	e	a	l	a	n	t	s	t	e	z	r	c	l	o	c	r	r
s	o	i	a	c	i	d	a	o	p	e	h	v	b	f	m	u	k	t	g	n	x	i	t
a	l	r	m	q	z	t	b	a	c	t	e	r	i	a	k	u	q	o	j	w	p	t	s
p	e	k	e	b	s	m	o	y	x	c	m	i	f	s	p	a	v	o	y	e	h	i	i
h	j	p	l	v	d	t	z	o	o	f	i	l	l	i	n	g	s	t	g	h	e	a	t
t	a	s	t	e	e	w	s	n	t	k	w	f	o	t	g	j	r	h	t	c	l	n	n
o	d	t	j	r	a	u	r	g	t	h	e	h	s	b	x	i	m	b	u	d	h	s	e
o	w	f	s	a	q	y	d	i	o	d	o	z	s	p	k	v	c	r	r	f	z	n	d
t	o	c	g	l	w	e	x	e	h	p	x	m	o	u	t	h	g	u	a	r	d	w	y
a	y	u	z	o	b	v	g	r	n	t	h	e	a	l	t	h	y	s	g	m	e	j	k
q	m	s	o	m	x	c	a	v	i	t	i	e	s	f	a	y	i	h	u	o	c	l	q
s	x	c	n	u	v	f	w	e	t	s	i	n	e	i	g	y	h	p	s	c	a	z	d
h	s	l	p	e	u	q	a	l	p	g	m	n	b	k	s	w	a	j	a	q	y	u	i

Instructions: Locate the following words in the puzzle. The words can be forwards, backwards, diagonal, up or down.

tooth	enamel	dentin	bacteria	nutrition	acid
floss	toothbrush	toothpaste	fluoride	healthy	sugar
cavities	fillings	dentist	hygienist	dental assistant	gums
plaque	sweets	checkup	smile	sealants	chew
Dudley	decay	mouthguard	molar	jaws	



**February is National
Children's Dental Health
Month.**

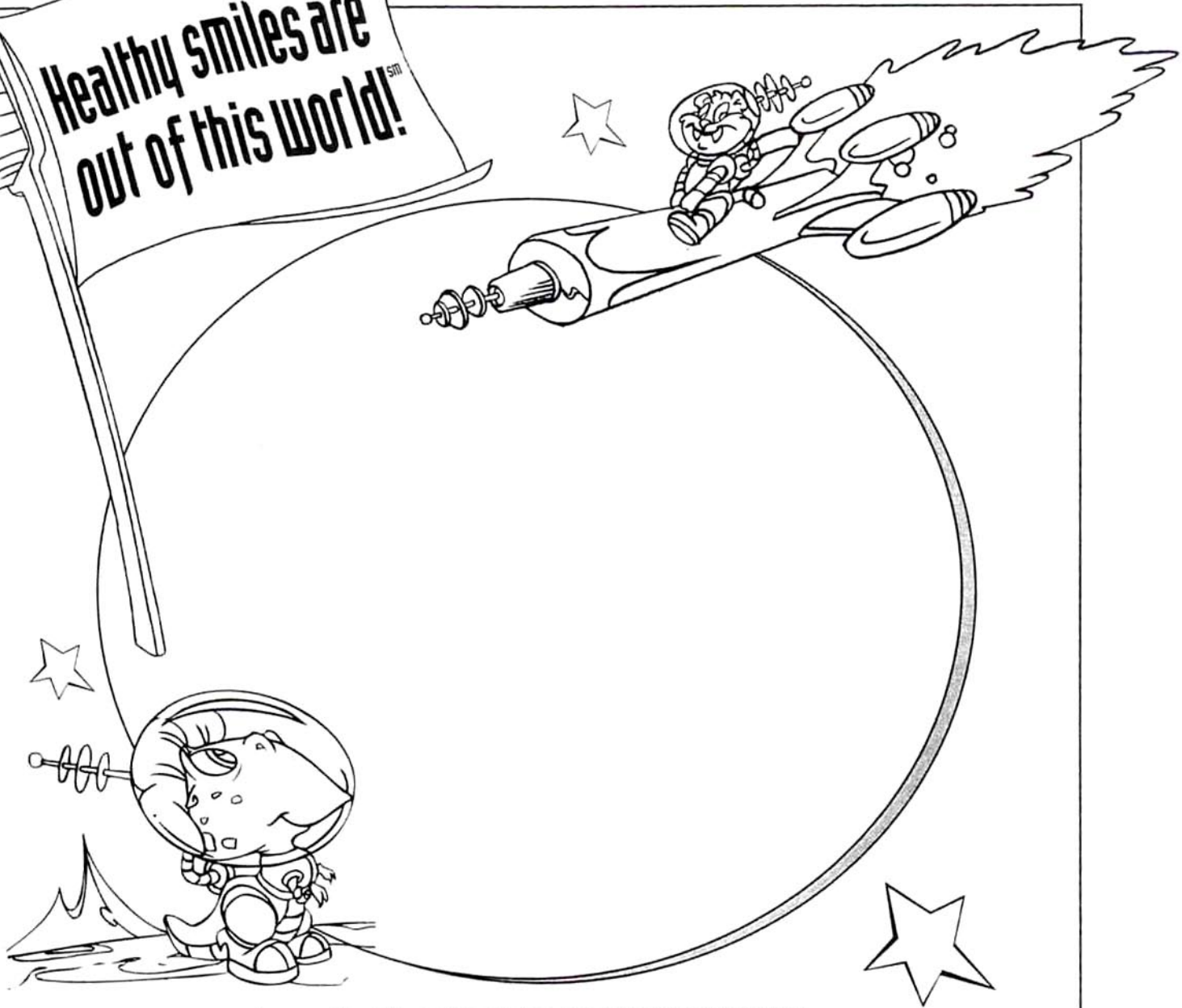
Put a star in the box each day
you brush and floss your teeth.
A month full of stars means
you are keeping your smile
healthy. Awesome job!

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Healthy smiles are
out of this world!™



Draw your picture with a great big smile in the circle above. Write a story about how you keep your smile healthy. Use the other side if you need more space to write.

Dear Parent:

Today, your child's class participated in a dental health presentation on why their teeth are important and how to keep their smiles healthy. The class learned about the importance of keeping their teeth clean through daily brushing and flossing. They also learned that it is important to eat healthy foods and visit their dentist regularly.

Please take a moment to go through the materials, which were provided to your child by the California Dental Association. These games and puzzles will help to reinforce the importance of good dental health and nutrition.

As a parent, you can serve as a role model by taking care of your own teeth. It's important to help children establish a good oral health routine at an early age. Good dental health today may prevent decay and possible tooth loss in the future.

Help your child keep a healthy smile for a lifetime!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher, your local component dental society or the California Dental Association at 800-CDA-SMILE.

Fact Sheet:

Dental Emergencies

California Dental Association

Injuries to the mouth may include teeth that have been knocked out (evulsed), forced out of position (extruded), or broken (fractured.) Sometimes lips, gums or cheeks have cuts. Oral injuries are often painful, and should be treated by a dentist as soon as possible.

EVULSED TEETH

When a tooth is knocked out you should:

- Attempt to find the tooth
- Immediately call your dentist for an emergency appointment
- Gently rinse, but do not scrub the tooth to remove dirt or debris
- Place the clean tooth in your mouth between the cheek and gum
- Do not attempt to replace the tooth into the socket. This could cause further damage
- Get to the dentist as soon as possible. If it is within a half hour of the injury, it may be possible to re-implant the tooth
- If it is not possible to store the tooth in the mouth of the injured person (e.g., a young child,) wrap the tooth in a clean cloth or gauze and immerse in milk

EXTRUDED TEETH

If the tooth is pushed out of place (inward or outward), it should be repositioned to its normal alignment with very light finger pressure. Do not force the tooth into the socket. Hold the tooth in place with a moist tissue or gauze. Again, it is vital that a dentist see the injured individual as quickly as possible.

FRACTURED TEETH

How a fractured tooth is treated will depend on how badly it is broken. Regardless of the damage, a dentist should always be consulted as quickly as possible to determine appropriate treatment.

Minor Fracture – Minor fractures can be smoothed by your dentist with a sandpaper disc or simply left alone. Another option is to restore the tooth with a composite restoration. In either case, you should treat the tooth with care for several days.

Moderate Fracture – Moderate fractures include damage to the enamel, dentin and/or pulp. If the pulp is not permanently damaged, there are a variety of procedures your dentist can use to restore your tooth to its original shape and function, including the placement of a full permanent crown. If pulpal damage has occurred, further dental treatment may be required.

Severe Fracture – Severe fractures may mean a traumatized tooth with a slim chance of recovery. However, there are dental procedures available to restore even severely damaged teeth and a dentist should be consulted as soon as possible to determine if treatment is possible.

INJURIES TO THE SOFT TISSUES OF THE MOUTH

Injuries to the inside of the mouth include tears, puncture wounds and lacerations to the cheek, lips or tongue. The wound should be cleaned right away and the injured person taken to the emergency room for the necessary suturing and wound repair.

Bleeding from a tongue laceration can be reduced by pulling the tongue forward and using gauze to place pressure on the wound area.

Fact Sheet:

Brush, Floss & Seal

California Dental Association

Preventing tooth decay can become even easier. You may already be aware that daily brushing and flossing are the most important weapons against the formation of plaque, the primary cause of cavities. In addition to your regular routine of brushing and flossing, your dentist can apply a coat of plastic material – called a sealant – on the top or biting surfaces of your back teeth. This plastic coating creates a barrier on your teeth and seals out the decay-causing bacteria that live in plaque.

What is plaque and why does it cause cavities?

The food and liquids you eat and drink combine with bacteria to produce a sticky film called plaque. Plaque attaches on and in between teeth, where it starts to eat away at the tooth enamel. If plaque is not removed regularly by brushing and flossing your teeth, it can produce acids that will create pits or holes (cavities) in the tooth. This is tooth decay.

How can sealants help prevent cavities?

Applying a thin plastic coating to your teeth makes it harder for the plaque to stick to the tiny grooves on the biting surfaces of the back teeth - protecting the tooth surface and reducing the risk of forming cavities.

Is it difficult to apply sealants?

No. Sealant placement is quick, simple and painless. Most often, sealants will last for several years. At regular check-up visits, your dentist or dental hygienist will check to see that sealants are still in place.

Who should get sealants?

Sealants are most effective in reducing cavities in children with newly formed permanent teeth. In fact, all children should have their molars (back teeth) evaluated for sealants soon after they erupt. For most children, this occurs approximately at ages 6 and 12.

Sealants can also be useful in cutting down formation of decay in adult teeth, as well. An application of sealants is a preventative measure to keep teeth healthy. It is an effective way to reduce the need for fillings and more expensive treatments that may be required to repair the damage from cavities, so sealants can save you money.

Ask your dentist whether sealants would be an appropriate treatment for you and your children to help prevent tooth decay.

Fact Sheet:

Preventing Decay with Fluoride

California Dental Association

What is fluoride?

Fluoride is a mineral that is naturally present in varying amounts in almost all foods and water supplies. Fluoride is also used in many consumer dental products such as toothpaste and fluoride mouth rinses.

How does fluoride reduce tooth decay?

Fluoride acts in two ways: topically and systemically. Topical fluorides strengthen teeth that have already erupted into the mouth. As the fluoride washes over the tooth surface, it is incorporated into the outer surface of the tooth, making it more resistant to decay. Additionally, topical fluoride is used to protect and desensitize root surfaces by providing additional mineralization to the naturally occurring “softer” root surface.

Systemic fluorides are those that are ingested through food and water and are used by the body as teeth are formed. Systemic fluorides, if ingested regularly during tooth formation, will be deposited throughout the developing layer of enamel, creating a stronger, more decay resistant outer layer. Systemic fluorides also protect teeth topically, as the fluoride is present in saliva, which continually bathes the teeth, promoting remineralization or repair of tooth surfaces that have been damaged by acids early in the decay process. Additionally, fluoride becomes incorporated into the dental plaque layer and can contribute further to the remineralization process.

How can I get fluoride?

Topical fluoride comes from use of fluoride containing toothpastes, mouth rinses, and gels which are placed directly onto the teeth. Children are routinely provided with topical fluoride applications at their dental checkup visits, as this is one of the most effective ways of providing the benefits of topical fluoride to newly erupted teeth. Additionally, depending on the level of decay activity or root surface sensitivity you or your child are experiencing, your dentist may prescribe a product with more available fluoride than can be found in over-the-counter products.

Systemic fluoride is available through community water supplies that either have naturally occurring levels of fluoride that are optimal or have had fluoride added to reach optimal levels. In communities without fluoridated water supplies, systemic fluoride is available through bottled water purchased specifically for its fluoride content or through fluoride tablets or vitamins prescribed by your dentist or your child’s pediatrician. Remember, in order for fluoride to exert systemic benefits, it must be ingested. So, if you do not live in a community with fluoridated

water, consult your dentist or physician about the need for another method of fluoride supplementation.

Who benefits from fluoride?

Everyone can benefit from fluoride's ability to help prevent tooth decay. Unfortunately, only 30% of California's water supply is fluoridated, which means that large portions of California's population are without the systemic benefits that fluoride provides. If your community is considering fluoridating its water supply, it is in your best interests to support these efforts, not only for yourself and your children, but for all those members of your community that do not have access to dental care and other means of fluoride supplementation and the cavity protection it provides.

If some fluoride is good, is more fluoride better?

The benefits of fluoride have been well known for over 50 years and are supported by numerous health and professional organizations, including the California Dental Association, the American Dental Association, The American Medical Association, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the US Public Health Service and the World Health Organization. However, as with nearly all substances we ingest, there are levels that are safe, levels that are optimal, and levels that can cause negative effects. When fluoride is ingested above optimal levels, a condition called dental fluorosis can result. While dental fluorosis is not harmful, it may cause discoloration, or white spots, on your child's teeth.

Parents should be aware of the sources of systemic fluoride their child receives. If your community water supply is fluoridated, then that will supply the optimal amount of systemic fluoride and tablets or vitamins should not also be ingested. Additionally, young children (those who cannot spit after brushing their teeth) should only use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste to ensure that unmeasured amounts of fluoride are not ingested.

What to remember?

Fluoride alone will not prevent tooth decay, it is only one of the tools necessary for maintaining strong teeth and positive oral health. Remember to brush your teeth at least twice a day with a fluoridated toothpaste, floss daily, eat a balanced diet, and limit the frequency of snacking, especially sweet and sticky foods. Just as important, visit your dentist regularly and follow his or her recommendations for your family's optimal oral health.

Fact Sheet: Mouth Guards

California Dental Association

Anyone who participates in sports, whether for pleasure, in youth or adult leagues, or even on a professional level – knows that losing isn't the worst thing that can happen to a player; sustaining a serious injury is, particularly when that injury is preventable.

That's why it's so important for adults and children who are active in sports to wear protective gear such as helmets, shin guards, knee and elbow pads, and mouth guards. Wearing a mouth guard can prevent serious injury and save a lot of pain. Each year this simple safety measure prevents more than 200,000 oral injuries among athletes.

Mouth Guards Aren't Mandatory in Most Sports. Why Are They Important?

- Facial and head injuries can be sustained in nearly every game, from "contact" sports such as football, soccer and basketball, to "non-contact" sports like baseball, gymnastics, bicycling or skateboarding. Damage to the teeth, lips, tongue and jaws are frequent occurrences in both children and adults. General dentists see more injuries to the mouth as a result of playing sports than from almost any other single cause. A survey conducted by the University of Texas found nearly 5 percent of male college athletes who played football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, baseball, ice hockey and lacrosse without wearing a mouth guard sustained some oral injury. That's more than 2,000 injuries in just a single year at the college level alone! It's at the junior high, high school, community and amateur levels that most injuries occur.
- Although more research is needed, mouth guards may help prevent serious injuries such as concussions. The literature has shown that mouth guards definitely help prevent fractured jaws and teeth, severe cuts to the cheek and tongue (often requiring surgery for repair), and traumatic damage to the roots and bone that hold teeth in place.
- Mouth guards are designed to help cushion the mouth, teeth and jaw, preventing significant damage where sports injuries are most prevalent. While mouth guards are not required equipment in many sports, wearing one is an important precaution for athletes of any age and ability.

What Should I Know Before Choosing a Mouth Guard?

For a mouth guard to be most effective, it is essential that it fit properly and stay in place during vigorous activity and the various positions the sport requires. Your dentist can determine what appliances (braces, retainers, bridgework, dentures) would be affected by wearing a mouth guard. Because growth spurts occur in the mouth just as they do elsewhere in the body, it's especially important for children's mouths to be evaluated by a dentist before selecting a mouth guard.

Different sports involve different levels of risk and potential injury. With the help of your dentist, you can select the right type of mouth guard for you or your child's sport of choice.

What are the Different Types of Mouth Guards?

All mouth guards are not created equal. Depending upon the design and materials used, mouthpieces will vary in fit, protection, ease of maintenance and longevity. Listed below are several types of Mouth Guards. Consult your dentist before you make a decision.

- **Custom-Made.** Formed by your dentist from a cast model of your teeth, these custom-made guards are designed to cover all the teeth and are shown in the literature to be the best type of protection. These mouth guards can cushion falls and blows to the chin. Custom-made mouth guards may be slightly more expensive than commercially produced mouthpieces, but they offer the best possible fit and protection and are the most comfortable.
- **Mouth-Formed.** These guards are generally made of acrylic gel or thermoplastic materials shaped to fit the contours of your teeth. They are placed in boiling water then attempted to be formed and molded to the teeth. They are commercially produced and do not offer the same fit and protection as a custom fitted mouth guard made from a model of the mouth.
- **Ready-Made Stock.** Commercially produced, off-the-shelf mouth guards are the least expensive, but also the least comfortable and the least effective protective mouthpieces. These rubber or polyvinyl pre-formed guards can be purchased at most sporting goods stores. They offer no attempt at fit whatsoever and are not recommended in the dental literature.

What Can I Do To Make My Mouth Guard Last?

Like all sports equipment, proper care will make any mouth guard last longer. Keep your mouthpiece in top shape by rinsing it with soap and water or mouthwash after each use and allowing it to air-dry. With proper care, a mouth guard should last the length of a season. The condition of the mouth guard should be checked before each use, particularly if the athlete has a tendency to chew on it. Mouth guards may be checked by your dentist at your regularly scheduled examinations.

Wearing a Mouth Guard Makes Good Sense.

If you or your children participate in sports, make sure that you are informed about the most common injuries that can occur during play, and take appropriate steps to be protected. Always wear a properly fitted mouth guard when you play. Do not wear removable appliances (retainers, bridges, or complete or partial dentures) when playing sports.

Fact Sheet:

Diet and Dental Health

California Dental Association

Staying in shape – and intact – is an integral part of an overall strategy for all sports. Protecting against injuries will keep you in the game. Keep your competitive edge. Protect both your general and oral health for your best performance on and off the field.

You know that what you eat can make a difference in the way you feel and perform. That is why you should try to choose foods that will help your body stay strong and healthy. But did you know that your choice of foods and your eating patterns also may affect your dental health?

HOW DOES DIET AFFECT DENTAL HEALTH?

Diet influences tooth decay. When the decay-causing bacteria (plaque) that live in your mouth come into contact with sugars and starches, acid is produced. Diets high in sweet, starchy and sticky foods produce higher acid levels, resulting in more tooth decay.

Additionally, if your diet is low in certain nutrients, it may be harder for the tissues of your mouth to resist infection. This may be a contributing factor to periodontal (gum) disease, the main cause of tooth loss in adults. Although poor nutrition does not actually cause periodontal disease, many researchers believe that the disease progresses faster and is more severe in patients whose diet does not supply the necessary nutrients.

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I EAT?

To make sure that you are getting enough nutrients for good general and oral health, you should choose foods from these basic food groups each day:

- Bread, cereals, rice and pasta – 6 to 11 servings
- Vegetables – 3-5 servings
- Fruit – 2-4 servings
- Milk, yogurt and cheese – 2-3 servings
- Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts – 2-3 servings
- Fats, oils and sweets – use sparingly

When you snack, avoid soft, sweet, sticky foods such as cakes, candy and dried fruits which cling to your teeth and promote tooth decay. Instead, choose dentally healthy foods such as nuts, raw vegetables, plain yogurt, cheese, popcorn and sugarless gum or candy. Gum or lozenges that

contain the non-cariogenic sweetener xylitol have been shown to reduce tooth decay and are a good choice for use after and between meals.

WHAT ABOUT FLUORIDE?

Fluoride is vital for strong, decay-resistant teeth. The most common source of fluoride in our diet is our water supply. While some community water supplies have been adjusted to contain optimal amounts of fluoride, many have not. If there is not enough fluoride in your community water, ask your dentist how you can get the fluoride you need. Often this will be in the form of a prescription fluoride supplement, or your dentist may recommend additional use of topical fluoride products, such as rinses or gels.

Together, a balanced diet, daily use of fluoride, brushing and flossing, and sensible eating habits can reduce the risk of or even prevent dental disease.

Fact Sheet:

Braces . . .for me?

California Dental Association

Braces, or orthodontic treatment, can benefit both children and adults. And recent advances in esthetics have made braces less noticeable than in the past. Brackets, the part of the braces that holds the wires, are bonded to the front of the teeth and can be metal, clear or tooth-colored. Sometimes the brackets can be fastened to the back of the teeth. Newest in esthetic orthodontic treatment are “invisible” braces – clear, removable, molded plastic aligners that move your teeth into new positions.

How do I know if I need braces?

Your dentist will evaluate your occlusion (bite) and may recommend braces if your bite is not properly aligned (malocclusion). Malocclusion may result from crowded teeth, missing teeth, extra teeth, or jaws that are out of alignment. In children, malocclusions can be hereditary, or can be the result of accidents, thumb sucking, early loss of baby teeth or other forces that impact tooth position and jaw development. For adults, malocclusions often result from missing teeth or shifts that occur over time in the bite. Of course, an adult may have a malocclusion that was never corrected as a child and decide to correct it as an adult!

Children should be evaluated by a dentist as their baby teeth are lost and their permanent teeth erupt. Often, early orthodontic intervention in a developing child can head off larger corrections that would need to be made later on.

How are orthodontic problems corrected?

The process that moves teeth is the same in everyone, child or adult. Steady pressure placed on the tooth puts pressure on the bone that holds the tooth, causing that bone to break down. Simultaneously, the tension created on the bone that is being “pulled” causes it to grow and fill in behind the moving tooth. Because the bones in adults are no longer growing and forming, orthodontic procedures in adults may take a bit longer than in children, but the process is essentially the same for everyone. Once the “active” appliances that move teeth are removed, retainers must be worn so that teeth stay in place and the bone around them becomes stable. However, the mouth is a dynamic environment. With forces applied daily from chewing, swallowing, etc., teeth will naturally move over time and people should be aware that in order to keep teeth in the same place indefinitely and prevent future shifting or relapse, regular use of a retainer may be necessary.

Innovations in orthodontics make them esthetic and effective for children and adults alike. Your dentist will evaluate the benefits of orthodontics for you and advise you on your options. If you have been waiting for a straighter, more beautiful smile, or a more functional bite . . . wait no longer!

Fact Sheet: Preventive Care

California Dental Association

Prevention is the key to keeping your teeth healthy and your smile beautiful for a life time.

WHY BRUSH?

Brushing your teeth after meals and between-meal snacks not only gets rid of food particles, it removes plaque, the sticky film that forms on teeth. Plaque is made up of bacteria that produce acids that cause tooth decay and gum disease, so thorough removal of plaque is the main goal of brushing. Using a fluoride toothpaste is also important because the fluoride reduces bacteria levels, as well as remineralizes tooth surfaces, making them stronger.

Your dentist or dental hygienist can recommend the best toothbrush for you. Generally, a brush with soft, end-rounded or polished bristles is less likely to injure gum tissue or damage the tooth surface. The size, shape and angle of the brush should allow you to reach every tooth. Children need smaller brushes than those designed for adults. Remember: worn-out toothbrushes can not properly clean your teeth and may injure your gums. Toothbrushes should be replaced every three or four months.

WHY FLOSS?

To prevent tooth decay and gum disease, plaque must be thoroughly removed from *all* tooth surfaces. Unfortunately, your brush can't reach effectively between your teeth and under the gumline. Because tooth decay and periodontal disease often start in these areas, it is as important to floss on a daily basis as it is to brush.

Flossing is a skill that needs to be learned. Do not be discouraged if you find it difficult at first. Your dentist or dental hygienist can help you learn to floss properly and give you tips on how to make it easier. With practice, you will find that flossing takes only a few minutes of your time each day.

WHAT ABOUT MOUTHRINSES AND MOUTHWASHES?

Mouthrinses and mouthwashes contain a variety of ingredients to help support your oral health. Products with fluoride can be used to help prevent decay. Mouthwashes with antibacterial properties can help prevent or control gingivitis (gum inflammation). If you are already using an over-the-counter product for your oral health, it is always a good idea to consult with your dentist on its appropriateness for you. Depending on your individual situation, your dentist may recommend use of a specific product.

ARE REGULAR CHECKUPS REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?

Yes! When your dentist looks in your mouth, he or she is not only looking for the signs of tooth decay and gum disease, but also for signs of systemic diseases – as your mouth is often a good indicator of your overall health. Conditions such as precancerous or cancerous lesions, diabetes, blocked salivary glands, and even HIV or AIDS can often be detected in an oral exam.

Beyond the information about your general health that your dentist may discover, regular dental care is essential to preventing more complicated dental problems from developing. Good oral hygiene practices, that include daily brushing and flossing, eating a healthy diet and visiting your dentist for a check-up twice a year – or as often as your dentist recommends – is the best way to keep your teeth healthy and your smile beautiful for a lifetime!