

PEDIATRIC ORAL HEALTH & HYGIENE

Common Dental Issues in Children

Tooth Decay

DESCRIPTION:

- Occurs when babies' teeth are in contact with sugars from fruit juice, milk, formula or any sweet drink for a length of time
- Older children develop decay from consuming too many sugary drinks and snacks



PROBLEMS:

- Pain and difficulty in chewing
- Cavities
- Tooth loss
- Abscess and infection

SOLUTIONS:

- Substitute sugary drinks with water or a pacifier
- Never dip a pacifier in sugar or honey
- Don't put babies to bed with a bottle filled with a sugary drink
- Don't add sugar to baby's food
- Wipe baby's teeth and gums with a wet cloth after each feeding
- Start tooth brushing as soon as the first tooth appears
- Avoid giving children too many sweets
- Ask your dentist about fluoride treatments



Thumb/Finger Sucking

DESCRIPTION:

- Thumb sucking is normal and healthy for infants; it makes them feel secure
- Most children break the habit on their own between the ages of 2 and 4
- After age 5, problems may arise; think about helping your child stop sucking

PROBLEMS:

- Teeth can be pushed out of alignment
- Difficulty in pronouncing words correctly
- Jaw can become misaligned
- Roof of mouth can become malformed

SOLUTIONS:

- Offer the child encouragement and positive reinforcement
- Cover finger or thumb with a bandage as a reminder
- Remove finger or thumb from the mouth once the child falls asleep
- May be caused by stress; try to determine and correct problems
- Dental appliances make thumb sucking less pleasurable

Teeth Grinding

DESCRIPTION:

- Child makes a loud, grating noise at night, or awakens with a sore jaw
- Can occur as a way to relieve pain from teething or an ear infection, as a result of certain chronic conditions or in reaction to some medications
- May be exaggerated by stress or anxiety



PROBLEMS:

- Damage to the teeth's enamel
- Tooth chipping
- Tooth sensitivity
- Headaches, facial or jaw pain

SOLUTIONS:

- Ask if child has a problem or is worried about something
- Create a calming bedtime routine to help the child relax
- Try massage and stretching exercise to relax muscles



Premature Tooth Loss

DESCRIPTION:

- Baby teeth are lost before the permanent teeth come in
- Occurs as a result of tooth decay, injury or lack of jaw space

PROBLEMS:

- Crowded, tilted or crooked permanent teeth
- Misaligned teeth can cause jaw problems or difficulty chewing

SOLUTIONS:

- Dentist can place a space maintainer to keep the space open
- The device is removed when the permanent tooth comes in

Tooth Misalignment

DESCRIPTION:

- Teeth are crowded, crooked or misaligned
- Bad bite because jaws don't meet correctly



PROBLEMS:

- Difficulty in keeping teeth clean can lead to decay
- Jaws can develop improperly
- Protruding teeth are at greater risk of chips and fractures
- Can negatively impact speaking and eating

SOLUTIONS:

- Teeth extraction can help with overcrowding
- Orthodontist can provide braces or a retainer
- Dentist can repair irregularly shaped teeth
- Surgery may be needed to lengthen or shorten jaw



Early Gum Disease

DESCRIPTION:

- Main cause is plaque accumulation
- Bleeding, puffy or swollen gums
- Noticeable gum recession
- Constant bad breath even after brushing

PROBLEMS:

- Can cause bone loss
- Inflammation of the gums
- Teeth may become loose

SOLUTIONS:

- Promote good oral hygiene (brushing, flossing)
- Regular dental care with professional cleanings
- Deep cleaning (scaling and root planing)
- Antibiotics in the periodontal pockets or taken orally
- Surgery to clean infected areas under the gums

Teaching Kids About Good Oral Hygiene

- Begin good oral health habits as soon as your baby's teeth appear
- Teach children how to brush and floss properly; do it for them until they can do it for themselves
- Let children choose their toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste flavor
- Try an electric toothbrush; it may be more comfortable for the child who is reluctant to brush or has difficulty using a manual brush
- Avoid giving kids too many sugary drinks and foods
- Increase water intake to help neutralize acids that cause cavities
- Schedule regular checkups with your child's dentist



According to several studies, bad oral hygiene in children has been linked to poor performance in school as well as to infectious disease and immune system problems.

Source: medicaldaily.com/can-bad-teeth-affect-childs-school-grades-242610



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