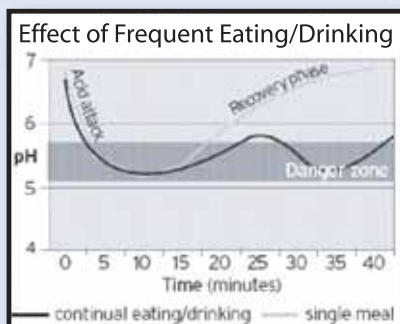


# Oral Health Tips for Preschool and School-aged Children

- Establish and stick to a **'toothbrushing routine'** every day. Should be supervised by an informed parent.
- Brush using a **pea-sized amount of fluoride-containing toothpaste twice per day**, after breakfast and right before bed. Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste.
- **Floss teeth** at least once per day. **Oral-B Hummingbird flossers** are an easy alternative when the child has a small mouth or if the manual dexterity isn't yet developed for conventional flossing.
- **Brush the tongue** for fresh breath.
- **Brush the gums** (pink skin around teeth). This is where many bacteria hide, causing gingivitis and cavities. Easier to access when cheeks are loose, so don't stretch open.
- Remember to encourage your child - **praise** often gets results!
- **Sugar** - especially sucrose- is the major dietary factor affecting cavity formation and progression.
- Sugar is broken down by **'sugarbugs' (bacteria)** into glue, which allows the bugs to stick to the teeth, and acid, which pulls the mineral out of teeth, softening them.



- **Frequent eating or drinking** increases the frequency of mineral being taken out of teeth, and increases the likelihood of softening the teeth, to the point where a hole or 'cavity' develops.
  - **Frequent eaters or drinkers** of sugar-containing foods or drinks will need more frequent toothbrushing and flossing.
  - **Rinsing with water after a snack or drink** will help to decrease the loss of mineral from teeth.
- Chewing **sugarless gum** can stimulate saliva, which puts mineral back into teeth. This is especially useful after eating or drinking.
  - **Avoid frequent sugar consumption and 'sticky' foods** like fruit rollups, toffee and granola bars. These can be very harmful to teeth.
  - Try to limit snacks to those with low cavity- causing potential, e.g. **cheeses, nuts, fruits (except dried), vegetables, popcorn, meats**.
  - Try to restrict cavity-causing foods to mealtimes, e.g. chocolate and ice cream for dessert.
  - **Fluoride supplements** (drops or pills) are useful in helping to prevent cavities. Dosage depends on age and weight of child. Other sources of fluoride must also be considered.
  - If you use a pill, the child chews it and leaves on teeth overnight. If drops, place directly on teeth before bed.