TODDLER
ANTICIPATORY
GUIDELINES
(18 Months to 3 Years)

Geshay Pediatric Dentistry, P.C.
James B. Geshay Jr., D.D.S.
Pediatric Dental Specialist
634 Pittsburgh Road
Uniontown, PA 15401
(724) 439-1576
As a practicing Pediatric Dental Specialist for nearly 29 years, Dr. Geshay has developed the following oral-hygiene guidelines that seem to work best for infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. Videos on proper tooth brushing and flossing techniques can be found on the internet.

18 Months of Age

Begin brushing your child’s teeth at least once a day with a fluoride-containing toothpaste. Use only a “rice-sized” piece of toothpaste on a soft bristled toothbrush. Never allow your child to swallow toothpaste that contains fluoride. This can cause a condition called “fluorosis” or “snow-capping” in the developing permanent teeth. Continue to avoid all liquid sugars, even fruit juices like apple and grape juice can have a devastating effect on your baby’s tooth enamel. Basically, the acids erode the enamel, weakening the surface, and the sugar feeds the cavity bugs so they can eat away at the deeper tooth structure. Eventually the cavity can spread into and infect the nerve of the tooth. We have found that sugary liquids account for the highest decay risk in infants, children, and adolescents. So, instead of offering apple juice or Juicy-Juice to your child, give them a sugar-free drink. Splenda is a safe sugar substitute and can be added as a sweetener to Kool-Aid, Iced Tea, or Crystal Lite. Without natural sugar, decay cannot develop.

Parents of combative children can utilize a very effective tooth brushing aid called the knee-to-knee approach. If you would like a demonstration of the technique, just ask one of our staff members.

Routine dental check-up visits should be scheduled every 6 months.

2 Years of Age

It is time to begin brushing your child’s teeth twice each day. Children at this age love to mimic their parents. This is a wonderful opportunity to be a good role model to your child. Let your child watch while you brush and floss your own teeth. With your child, the most important time to brush is just before bed. Some parents have found success in brushing their child’s teeth during the nightly bath routine. Use only a “rice-sized” portion of toothpaste. Never allow your child to swallow the toothpaste willfully. We advise limiting the amount of toothpaste to a “rice-sized” portion because, if your child does swallow the amount, it will not harm their developing teeth.

Some children begin to develop an independent spirit at this age. It is okay to allow them to brush by themselves once a day with a “rice-sized” drop of toothpaste. Until a child is old enough to tie their own shoes, they do not have the dexterity to brush their teeth thoroughly and competently. If you child wants to brush anymore than twice a day, make sure that only fluoride-free tooth and gum cleanser is used for these additional times.

If you have any concerns about your child’s speech and language development, we can be of help. Ask for our phonetic development handout.
Other General Guidelines

1. Eliminate all drinks containing sugar, especially fruit juices, sports drinks, and all other sodas.
2. “Splenda” is a safe sugar substitute for children and will not promote cavities.
3. The most important time to brush is just before bedtime.
4. Begin using a fluoride mouth rinse (like A.C.T.) at age 5.
5. Protect permanent six-year molar grooves with sealants.
6. Have your child begin flossing at the age of 7.
7. Brush at least once a day for your child until the age of 5 or until they are able to tie their own shoes.
8. Supervise tooth brushing until the age of 12.
9. Protect permanent twelve-year molar grooves with sealants.
10. Support the use of mouth guards for all sports activities.
11. Support the use of helmets while riding bicycles.
12. Support the use of car seats and seat belts.
13. Be a good role model, take good care of your own teeth, avoid soda, and brush and floss daily.