



Bathe and Brush Teeth Regularly

Help your child bathe at least every other day and brush his teeth after breakfast and before bed. This routine can become part of the daily ritual, as natural as using a spoon to eat ice cream! Children are often reluctant to take time out of their busy day to bathe, and parents are often too busy and too harried to ensure good physical hygiene. But they are part of using good manners, and showing respect to yourself and to others.

Getting children to brush their teeth is often a nightly battle; and when the inevitable braces are thrown into the equation, the battle intensifies. It's reported that dental health has declined as the amount of sugar children ingest increases. Soft drinks and sweet fruit juices, the mainstay of many children's diets, are the biggest culprits in contributing to tooth decay, gum disease, and obesity. Bad dental health is a major distraction to children trying to learn in school; teeth and gum pain makes children unable to concentrate on reading, writing and arithmetic.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Children should be encouraged to drink water when thirsty.**
- **Model good dental hygiene by brushing your teeth beside your child, so he can watch you and imitate how you brush.**
- **Praise good brushing techniques and a good report from his dental checkup; ask your child's dentist how often she recommends your child visit her. .**
- **Use bath time as a social ritual, with parents discussing the day's events while bathing preschoolers.** As children grow into the modest stage of development and no longer want parents to be in the room monitoring bath time, they will have magically developed the habit for life.
- **For example, "Let's take a bath every night, so we can be clean and healthy. You take one first, and then I'll take one later."**
- **Emphasize how nice it feels to be clean and know you are respecting yourself and other by taking care of your hygiene.**

