

Give your teenager SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT



Your little one isn't so little anymore. As your child begins to change during adolescence, his or her oral health needs may change, too. Work with your dentist to find out what you can do to promote good oral health. After all, the self confidence that comes with a healthy smile, good breath and strong teeth can give your teen something to smile about.

Chew on this: adolescents are at greater risk for gum disease¹

During puberty, higher levels of progesterone and estrogen cause more blood to circulate through the gums, making them more sensitive to food and plaque. This can irritate the gums, and cause them to swell, redden and be tender. Certain medications, health conditions or even brushing too aggressively can also put teens at greater risk for gum disease. And some girls may even experience a temporary form of "menstruation gingivitis," or swollen or bleeding gums during the days before their period.

When your moody kids aren't in the mood to brush

Oily skin. Acne. Sweat. Body odor. Sound like your teenager? When teens are focused on all of these new bodily changes, taking care of their teeth can become

a low priority. But your teen should be careful. Bad oral hygiene can lead to a long list of problems, including tooth decay, injured gums, exposed tooth roots and cracked teeth. Worn enamel or loose fillings can make teeth extra-sensitive to temperature changes and lead to more serious problems.

Here's What You Can Do:

- 1. Start good habits early.** Children tend to carry those good oral health habits into adolescence.
- 2. Be a good role model.** Believe it or not, your child does look up to you.
- 3. Go to the dentist regularly.** Try booking your next appointment before you leave the dentist's office.
- 4. Watch out for any problems.** If your child smiles less, has bad breath, bleeds during brushing or complains of mouth pain, call your dentist.

1. Academy of Periodontology. (n.d.). *Protecting children's oral health*. Retrieved from <http://www.perio.org/consumer/children.htm>

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