



# Healthy People Dental

## Start the School Year Off with a SMILE

Every child wants to look their best as they head back to school this fall. Parents help by scheduling haircuts and buying new outfits, but most overlook the simple steps to helping their child maintain one of their most visible features – their smile.

Studies show that one of the first things people notice about someone is their smile and that a good smile creates a positive self-image...something all parents wish for their children. "Back-to-school time is the perfect time to incorporate good oral health habits into a child's daily routine," says Academy of General Dentistry spokesperson Cindy Flanagan, DDS, FAGD. "The sooner you make them a priority, the sooner your child will benefit."

### Schedule a back-to-school dental visit

Seeing a dentist twice a year during the school-age years is vital because this is a time of great change in the mouth, with kids losing baby teeth and getting in their permanent teeth. Tooth decay is still the most common chronic childhood disease and, left untreated, it can impair a child's ability to eat, speak, sleep and learn. However, studies show more than 60 percent of school-age children do not see a dentist annually. Simple preventive checkups twice a year can head off childhood decay and help you and your child learn how to protect their teeth throughout the year.

### Establish daily brushing habits with your children

Children should brush at least twice a day. To encourage children to brush after every meal, let them pick out their own travel toothbrush and toothpaste to take to school. There are many child-friendly products that help encourage younger children to brush. Make sure your child's toothpaste contains fluoride and the toothbrush is soft-bristled."

### Make good nutrition a top priority

National studies show that only one in five school-age children eats the recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables – greatly increasing their risk of cavities. In addition, only one in five children meets even the minimum standards for calcium consumption. Take charge of your child's health this school year by packing healthy lunches.

Don't forget after-school snacks. Many school children go straight to sporting practices after school and turn to sugary foods and drinks from a vending machine when they don't have any other option, which are disastrous to children's oral health. Bite-sized carrots, fruits, nuts and bottled water are much better after-school snack options and give children the fuel they need to excel in physical activity.

### Healthy Mouth Recipe

#### Fruits, Veggies & Peanut Butter Dip

Snack sized fruits and veggies will disappear with this tasty and easy to make peanut butter dip. Greek yogurt is a dental super food and some added cinnamon to give it a little kick of flavor.

- ¾ Cup Plain Greek Yogurt
- ½ Cup Natural Peanut Butter
- ½ Teaspoon Cinnamon

