

## Why does my child need mouth care?

Your child needs mouth care to:

- Keep germs away from their gums. These germs can cause an infection that can enter the blood. This could cause disease in other parts of the body.
- Keep germs out of their mouth. Germs in your child's mouth could go to their lungs when a breathing tube is in place.

## When does my child need mouth care?

Your child needs mouth care:

- 2 times a day (morning and night).
- Every 4 hours if they have a breathing tube.

Mouth care every 4 hours limits germs that may cause an infection in the lungs.

## Who should do mouth care?

- If your child does not have a breathing tube: your child, family or a trained caregiver may brush their teeth.
- If your child has a breathing tube: only the nurse, respiratory therapist or a trained caregiver may do mouth care.

## How do I do mouth care?

**Children with teeth and no breathing tube** should brush their teeth.

- Wet a toothbrush with water.
- Put a small amount of toothpaste on the toothbrush.
- Brush the gums on both the outside and inside of the teeth.
- Spit out the toothpaste.
- Rinse out the mouth with water. Spit the water out.
- Put a thin layer of water-soluble jelly or ointment (such as wax-based lip balm) on your child's lips.

**Babies without teeth and no breathing tube** should NOT use a brush, but instead:

- Cover your finger with gauze. [Or, use a cotton swab (like a Q-tip) or sponge.]
- Wet the gauze with water.
- Rub the gums gently.
- Suction fluid (spit) as needed.
- Put a thin layer of water-soluble jelly or ointment (such as wax-based lip balm) on your child's lips.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Mouth care, continued

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Children with a breathing tube should receive mouth care:

- **Only do mouth care for your child if you have been trained.**
- The hospital uses a special kit to brush or clean the mouth.

## What else do I need to know?

- If your child has braces, do mouth care as advised on page 1. An orthodontist may help manage the braces if the inside of the mouth gets sores or irritated while a breathing tube is in place.
- If your child has tooth decay or broken teeth, a dentist may check your child's teeth. The dentist can help care for your child's mouth while your child is in the hospital and after your child goes home.
- Some children should not brush their teeth. Do not brush your child's teeth if they have a risk of bleeding (such as problems forming blood clots or if they take a medicine called heparin). In this case, your child may use a mouth swab instead.
- Tell your child's care team if your child gets mouth sores or irritation.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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