

## Shelby County Public Health Nursing Press Release

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### *Oral Health Important for Kids*

Every parent knows that a healthy smile is a sign of a happy child and oral health experts agree that creating those healthy smiles begins in infancy and continues throughout childhood. Experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed the following pediatric oral health tips. These simple steps assist parents in taking care of their children's teeth as well as aid in teaching proper dental habits

1. **Start cleaning teeth early.** As the first tooth appears, begin cleaning by wiping with a clean, damp cloth every day. When more teeth come in, switch to a small, soft toothbrush. Begin using toothpaste with fluoride when the child is two years old.
2. **Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste.** Fluoride is important in fighting cavities. Use only a small amount of toothpaste, about the size of a pea. Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste and to rinse well after brushing.
3. **Supervise brushing.** Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone, usually about age 7 or 8 years of age. Continue to closely watch brushing to make sure your child is doing a thorough job and using only a small amount of toothpaste.
4. **Talk to your child's doctor or dentist.** Check with your doctor or dentist about your child's specific oral health needs. Begin early so the teeth will last a lifetime.

For more information visit [www.cdc.gov/oralhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth) or contact your local dental provider.