

# Dental Health and Heart Health Go Hand in Hand



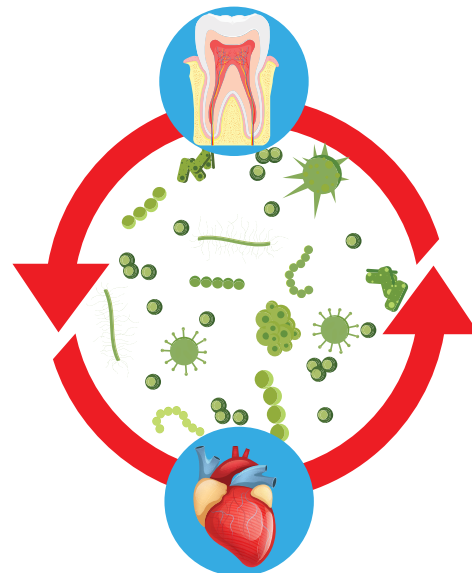
Young children with [congenital heart defects \(CHD\)](#) are at greater risk for [tooth decay](#) because their baby teeth may have weak enamel.

Healthy teeth and gums are important for everyone but especially for children with heart conditions.

Children with heart disease may have weaker teeth due to poor oxygenation. Cardiac medications that may cause dry mouth can also increase risk for cavities. There are complicated background factors often associated with nutrition, medication, and the demanding situation of these children's families that all play a part in their dental health.

## What's the connection between your teeth and your heart?

Our teeth and our heart share the same blood—meaning the same bacteria that can lead to cavities in teeth can travel to the heart and cause a dangerous infection called *endocarditis*. Children with artificial valves or other prosthetic materials and those with cyanosis are especially susceptible.



## What can I do to help protect my child's health?

Prevention is the best medicine, and there is much you can do to prevent cavities!

Daily cleaning of the mouth should start from birth. Begin [regular dental visits](#) by 12 months of age.

## Finding a pediatric dentist is the first step.

Your child's cardiologist may have a recommendation for a pediatric dentist who has experience treating children with heart conditions and can tell you whether your child requires antibiotics for routine cleanings or other procedures.

You can also ask your child's cardiologist about any additional considerations for your child's dental visits, such as the use of [sedation or anesthesia](#).

If you are having trouble finding a dentist or need dental coverage, visit [insurekidsnow.gov](#).

## Talk with your child's dentist before the appointment.

Discuss your child's diagnosis and any medications he or she takes. Ask your child's dentist to contact your child's cardiologist to coordinate care and decide whether your child should have any medication changes before any dental procedure.

## How to Prevent tooth decay at home.

Reduce the amount of sugar your child eats and drinks to keep bacteria from starting the decay process. Good oral hygiene, such as regular brushing in the morning and before going to sleep and flossing, are great ways to remove the acid made by the bacteria that causes decay. Your child's dentist will have suggestions for other ways to keep your child's teeth healthy.