



## Oral Health

April is Oral Health Awareness Month, but good oral health habits are for life.

### 1. Has your child visited a dental professional?

Children should see a dentist or dental hygienist by 12 months of age or within six months of getting their first tooth. The earlier, the better!

### 2. Do you help with or supervise your child's brushing two times per day, for two minutes each time?

An adult should assist young children when brushing until they are at least eight years old.

### 3. Does your child have less than one cup of juice per day?

Drinks containing sugar, even naturally, increase the risk of cavities in teeth.

### 4. Are your child's snacks healthy?

Snacking often on sugary treats will increase the acid attacks in your child's mouth.

If you answered "No" to any of these questions above, please talk to your family's dental care provider about your child's dental development.



Parents should know if they have any untreated cavities. The bacteria that cause decay can be passed on from parent to child. Taking care of your own oral health helps to improve your child's oral health.

## Screen-Free Challenge



A Screen-Free Challenge asks families to turn off all screens (e.g., televisions, computers and video games) for five days and increase their levels of physical activity.

### Have your family take the pledge and get active!

Inactivity is a serious health problem. Many Canadian children are not active enough for healthy growth and development. Learning the importance of physical activity at a young age is an important step towards a healthy active future.

Replace TV shows with a family walk around the neighborhood! Exchange game controllers for your bike! Have a family meeting and come up with some ideas that work for you.

Those who participate are encouraged to complete a daily activity log to keep track of activities.

Visit our website at [www.algomapublichealth.com](http://www.algomapublichealth.com) for more information, and all of the tools you need for a Screen-Free Challenge. Can you do it?

## Raising Sexually Healthy Children – Surviving Puberty

Parenting is one of the toughest jobs in the world and staying on top of your child's changing needs is a challenge. One moment your child is starting school and the next they are starting puberty!

Common issues that arise during puberty include body image, body changes, questions about sexual attraction and feelings, and worries about being “normal.”

This may seem overwhelming for parents, but you don't have to tackle everything at once. Start slowly and remember you truly are the best person to talk to your child. Keep in mind:

- You know your child best
- You are available
- You can start early
- You are caring and affectionate
- You know your family values
- You can boost your child's self-esteem
- You can use your sense of humour

For information on puberty and how to talk to your children, please visit our parenting and puberty page at [www.algomapublichealth.com/sex](http://www.algomapublichealth.com/sex).



## Making Time to Eat Together

Using pre-prepared and convenience food has become the norm for many families, and life's busy schedules can sometimes take away from meals shared together as a family. There are significant nutritional and non-nutritional benefits for school-aged children and youth who eat together with their families.

### Nutritional benefits:

- Improved nutrient intake; better food.
- Decreased risk for overweight and obesity.
- Protection against eating disorders in youth.

### Non-nutritional benefits:

- Improved vocabulary in preschool children.
- Increased motivation and participation in school.
- Improved school performance.
- Decreased risk for substance abuse.
- Improved social adjustment (e.g., fewer fights, decreased early sexual activity).
- Improved support, boundaries and expectations within the family.
- Improved view of children's personal future.

### “But I have no time to cook!”

- Make ‘planned extras’ (e.g., cook extra chicken at dinner to use the next night).
- Prepare food in big batches (e.g., chili or soup) and freeze in smaller portions.
- Use healthy convenience foods to your advantage (e.g., try a washed and ready-to-eat salad or slaw with a rotisserie chicken and whole wheat dinner rolls).
- Include all family members in meal preparation (e.g., chopping vegetables, mixing ingredients, setting the table, filling glasses, cleaning dishes, filling the dishwasher).

## Let's Get Families Cooking Together!

Kids involved in food preparation are more likely to eat better and try new foods (including more of those important veggies and fruit). They are also more confident in the kitchen. Learning to tie your shoes is an important life skill, we think cooking is too...don't you? To learn about cooking together, go to [www.familykitchen.ca](http://www.familykitchen.ca).

