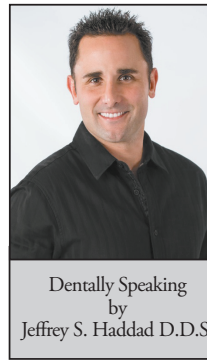


## How could my child have a cavity? A dentist's wake up call

I have been practicing dentistry almost 15 years. I have been trained to diagnose oral diseases, treat the majority of dental issues, and educate my patients on proper oral hygiene and prevention...so how could my



Dentally Speaking  
by  
Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S.

own daughter get a cavity? In honor of Children's Dental Health Month, I thought I would share a story that hit close to home (actually in my home) that made me realize that proper oral hygiene and diet for children needs to be more "personalized," because all children are not the same.

Furthermore, if your child does happen to get a cavity, or multiple cavities, I want parents to know what they can do to hopefully avoid future decay in the mouth.

For years, I have guided parents on how to help their children care for their teeth and gums. I always recommend parents being directly involved with brushing their child's teeth even up to about 9 or 10 years old. For very young children (6 months-3 years), I would have parents actually brush their child's teeth for them while showing them the proper techniques and brushing times (2-3 minutes). From 4-7 years, close supervision is still highly recommended and even a "follow-up" brushing by parents is very helpful.

I rarely ever encouraged flossing young children's teeth because I never thought it was necessary, and to be honest, I didn't think it was realistic to believe that young children would consider flossing (especially because it is hard enough to get parents themselves to floss!).

If I found that a child was still getting cavities, I usually blamed it on poor diet or poor oral hygiene habits, or both. If that was the case, I would usually recommend a fluoride rinse at night and remind parents that they need to modify either their child's diet or improve their brushing habits.

Well, I have officially changed my philosophy and

approach after I found 3 cavities on my 6-year-old daughter!

Imagine having a dentist for a father. Yes, it's as bad as you think it would be. My children do not drink anything besides water, milk at dinner, and the occasional all natural fruit juice at breakfast. I have been brushing their teeth since their first one erupted and I

am a stickler for rechecking, and re-brushing their teeth on many nights.

Their diet is essentially sugar-free, with the occasional dessert for a treat. So when my daughter had her first set of X-rays last year, I was horrified to find 3 cavities in between her teeth. It was official; I had "failed" as a parent... and a dentist!

It was time for me learn from this experience and to change my ways not only as a parent, but as a dental educator to my patients.

My daughter's cavities were all in between her teeth, and brushing alone will not prevent this from happening. Many children have spaces in between their teeth allowing food to flush itself out and not cause any harm, but this is not the case with all kids so flossing may be necessary to properly keep these areas clean.

In addition, many children do not possess enough of the "good" bacteria to combat the "bad" bacteria that cause cavities.

In these cases, a nightly fluoride rinse is very important for extra protection of their teeth and to strengthen the outer enamel of baby teeth and incoming permanent teeth.

You can buy these rinses over-the-counter or have your dentist prescribe a fluoride rinse for you.

### **My new recommendations to parents for proper children's homecare:**

- **Brush their teeth 2 times/day (morning and night) for 2 minutes.**

- **Floss once a day at night (Plastic dental flossers work great for kids).**

- **Over-the counter fluoride rinse at night before bed (do not rinse after).**

- **Brush and floss your child's teeth for them until you are confident in their skills even up to age 10 (and then still re-check and re-brush if necessary).**

**What happens if my child gets a cavity?**

- **Make sure to improve your oral hygiene routine with proper technique, flossing, and brushing times. Add fluoride rinse at night if not doing so already.**

- **Analyze diet (amount of sugar, juices, pop) and modify it if necessary. Some children need stricter diets than others.**

- **Do NOT tell them they will be getting a shot at the dentist! Most children are not aware they even receive a shot, and sometimes they are not even necessary. Fear is not a good way to build a young dental patient**

- **Use it as a learning experience for you and for your child. This will pave the way for proper oral hygiene as adult teeth erupt into the mouth.**

Through this experience, I have realized that not all children are created equal as far as oral health is concerned. Some kids need special attention or care in order to avoid cavities and keep their mouths healthy.

I regret all those years of thinking that brushing, and brushing alone, was enough for all kids to prevent cavities. In recent months, our office has spoken to over 300 children in our community educating them on our recommended home care and diet.

Hopefully, this month's article will also help parents identify their role in their children's oral health.

For more information, visit [www.rochesteradvanced-dentistry.com](http://www.rochesteradvanced-dentistry.com).