



Older children and young adults have their own dental challenges. Check out these helpful tips from SoonerCare.

## Dental care for tweens and teens is as easy as 1-2-3!

It's a fact of life that as children get older they want and seek more independence. They begin to have their own social calendars and extracurricular activities. As parents, it's important to make sure that these things don't interfere with your child's self-care and health care.

Having regular health and dental checkups should always be a part of your child's routine. In addition to brushing twice a day and flossing daily, here are a few easy things tweens and teens can do to stay healthy:

**1. Reduce or skip soda** – The large amounts of sugar in regular soft drinks can cause cavities and have the potential to cause diabetes, heart disease, weight gain and many other health problems. Other

ingredients in soda can permanently damage tooth enamel – a tooth's best defense. Even diet sodas carry the same or similar risks.

Water is best! If your child must drink soda, have him brush afterward or, at least, rinse his mouth with water.

**2. Be on guard** – Many young people participate in sports or other activities that put them at risk for oral injuries. If this includes your child, then he should wear a mouth guard! Wearing a mouth guard may protect him from dental damage ... and even damage to his brain!

There are several types of mouth guards. Ask your child's dentist about the best option for your family and how to maintain

*Brush up on the facts about children's dental health*

- *How does soda affect my child's teeth?*
- *Tobacco is ruining my child's smile. What can I do?*

*"Tooth decay is the most common chronic infection in children in the United States. It's also preventable."*





At SoonerCare, the dental health of our kids is a priority. Visit us online at [www.okhca.org/dental](http://www.okhca.org/dental).

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it properly.

**3. Choose healthy snacks** – Like soda, the sugar found in many “nutrition” bars and energy drinks can be bad for your child’s overall health. Encourage them to choose healthy snacks like apples or cheese. Or, why not go the

extra mile and don’t buy junk food? Instead, keep fruits and veggies on hand at home for your growing child’s snack attacks.

Finally, how you care for your teeth can influence the dental habits of your child. Set a good example!

## For teeth’s sake: Snuff out the tobacco habit!

It’s no secret that smoking is bad for your body, so it should be no surprise that it’s also not good for your teeth. All forms of tobacco can cause bad breath, tooth loss, stained teeth and tongue, oral cancer and more. The best way to prevent these problems is simply to not use tobacco products.

SoonerCare wants your child to have a healthy smile for a lifetime. Our free SoonerQuit program can give him the tools he needs to kick tobacco. Most SoonerCare members who use tobacco and are age 12 and older can sign up. To learn more, please visit [www.okhca.org/tobacco](http://www.okhca.org/tobacco).



Help your child SAY **NO to tobacco for brighter teeth and a healthier body.**