

# FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME and DENTAL HEALTH

## HOW DOES FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME AFFECT DENTAL HEALTH?

1. Dental abnormalities are very common with this condition. Children may have a small jaw as well as missing, malformed, or misaligned teeth.
2. Mouth breathing occurs frequently, due to misaligned facial structure and can lead to Xerostomia (dry mouth).
3. Patients often have weak oral muscles that make eating, sucking on a straw, and other movements difficult.
4. Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome are often born with cleft lip and palate.
5. Patients with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome may be more sensitive to different tastes and textures.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR THOSE CARING FOR CHILDREN WITH FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME

1. Toothbrushing may be a challenge due to misaligned teeth, small jaw, and weak oral muscles. The smallest toothbrush size possible should be used. A *Sulcabrush* – a special offset tiny brush head – is perfect for accessing crowded or angled teeth.

Children suffering from this disorder have difficulty focusing and cooperating at times. They may need extra help and patience when showing them how to brush. Also, it's a good idea to try to have them brush at the same time every day. Children suffering from this disorder do best when they have a specific routine.

2. Children suffering from Fetal Alcohol Syndrome are often sensitive to various flavors and tastes. In some cases, children may not be able to brush with regular toothpaste. Dipping the brush bristles in water and thoroughly removing plaque around the gums may be the best idea. Floss should be used as well. Try to avoid mint flavored or waxed flosses. As long as visible plaque is physically removed, the risk of developing gum disease and cavities is greatly reduced.
3. Try to keep oral tissues hydrated as much as possible. Avoid alcohol based oral products and advise child to drink water frequently.