

Tips on Preventing Susceptibility to H1N1 Flu

Teaching your kids to wash their hands frequently during flu season is a good idea, but brushing their teeth correctly could do more to prevent their actually coming down with a virus. Just as with adults, gum disease can lead to illness in other parts of the body, including flu, pneumonia, chronic colds, sinusitis and ear infections.

Dr. McConnell shares his **tips for teaching your kids flu-preventing oral hygiene techniques** that parents can also use for their own benefit:

- Wash your hands thoroughly before practicing oral hygiene.
- Brush twice a day for two minutes focusing on the gum-line. Brush your tongue – it collects bacteria too.
- Floss daily.
- Consider advanced technologies. Sonicare toothbrushes and WaterPik dental water jets are excellent, the latter of which is especially good for kids with braces.
- Air-dry your toothbrush or toothbrush head in an upright position after using to avoid bacterial build-up.
- Never share your toothbrush, toothpaste or toothbrush holder.
- Replace your toothbrush or toothbrush head at least every season. If you've been sick, replace it as soon as your illness is on the mend to prevent re-infection.
- When choosing mouthwashes and toothpastes, look for sugar free and alcohol free products. The drying effect of alcohol and addition of sugars can upset the balance of healthy and harmful bacteria in the mouth. There are natural products available. Always read the labels!
- Visit your dentist every six months or as recommended for a cleaning and check-up.