

## ASK OUR EXPERTS

## Why are my son's teeth always breaking?

**Q** Dear Doctor, I have had frequent visits to the dentist to fix holes and broken teeth of my four-year-old son. This has been financially draining and time-consuming. How can I ensure healthy teeth for my son? Please advise. Jotham from Jinja

Pamela

**A** Dear Pamela, What Dear Jotham, Dental problems in young children are very common. At the age of four, cavities often develop due to frequent snacking or consuming sugary foods, juice, soda, sweetened tea, or milk taken multiple times a day. Other causes include poor brushing habits, not using fluoride toothpaste, weak enamel, and night-time feeding. The good news is that most of these issues can be managed at home.

Children cannot brush



Cavities often develop due to frequent snacking

their teeth properly on their own until about age 7 or 8. Therefore, helping them brush twice a day – morning and evening before bed – will help keep their teeth clean. Going to bed without brushing increases inflammation, making gums painful, swollen and more likely to bleed. Additionally, bacteria multiply overnight and cause morning bad breath, so brushing at night

keeps the mouth fresh.

Always supervise or brush your son's teeth yourself, using a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and making sure to reach all sides gently.

Avoid sugary snacks at night, including milk, juice, biscuits and sweets, as eating these before bed greatly increases the risk of cavities. Encourage your son to rinse his mouth with water after eating, especially after sticky or sweet foods. Also, take your son for regular dental check-ups every six months. Early detection prevents painful and costly problems.

You can also give your son 1 to 2 servings of calcium-rich foods daily to help strengthen and rebuild weak enamel. These include milk and yoghurt, ghee and butter, cheese, silverfish (mukene), sesame seeds (sim-sim), and green leafy vegetables such as doodo, nakati and sukuma wiki.