



## Oral Health Information for Children

### **Baby Teeth:**

Teething varies from each child. Many children begin teething around six months of age, most baby teeth are grown in by age three. In most cases the lower front teeth appear first, superseded by the upper front teeth. Despite very few teething problems in babies, the process may often cause irritation, pain, soreness, and annoyance. This often results in making your baby ill-tempered, and not wanting to eat. To alleviate some of the irritation, it is suggested that your baby chew on a clean, and chilled teething ring, or wet cloth. We do not recommend cookies or biscuits advertised for teething, as these can stick to the teeth and cause tooth decay if not properly cleaned.

By the age of three, your child should have twenty teeth, ten in the upper jaw, and ten in the lower jaw. Well kept baby teeth are crucial as they help your child look good, eat well, and learn to speak properly. Baby teeth also help guide the permanent, "adult" teeth into their corresponding positions. While it is important to keep baby teeth clean and healthy, keep in mind that they are not fully hardened and may decay easily. Do not fret if your child's permanent teeth have not settled in as quickly as other children, some permanent teeth don't come in until the ages of twelve or thirteen.

### **Diet and Tooth Decay:**

Bacteria on the teeth causes tooth decay. Bacteria capitalizes on the remaining starches and sugars from foods and beverages to produce acid that breaks down tooth enamel, which causes tooth decay. Anything other than water, especially fruit juices, sweetened teas, soda, breast milk, cow's milk, soy milk, and formula, all of which contains some amount of sugar, can cause tooth decay if left on the tooth for prolonged periods of time. Drinking from bottles, and sippy cups filled with anything other than water, results in the teeth being exposed to these sugars and starches for extended periods of time. This continually softens the enamel on the tooth, producing a beneficial atmosphere for bacteria to break down the tooth. Pay careful attention to how often food is eaten, and how often food and beverages stay on the teeth.



### **Other Factors for Tooth Decay:**

Difficulty or poor cleaning of the child's teeth can also be a factor for tooth decay since the bacteria is not properly cleaned. All children under the age of 10 should be supervised when brushing and flossing to ensure proper cleaning of the teeth, and also to develop sufficient cleaning habits for when they get older.

### **Fluoride:**

Fluoride is a natural mineral found throughout the earth's crust and widely distributed in nature. It has also been proven effective in fighting cavities at a low-cost. Most brands of toothpaste contain fluoride, some even make fluoride rich toothpastes to be even more effective in preventing tooth decay. Fluoride starts to work immediately when it touches the teeth, and strengthens enamel, making it more resistant to decay. Using a toothpaste with fluoride twice a day is crucial in preventing tooth decay. Many children get enough amounts of fluoride by using the twice a day rule, however some who are at a higher risk for tooth decay may need additional fluoride in order to protect their teeth. Ask us for further information if you fear your child is at risk of tooth decay.

### **Preventing Tooth Decay:**

For infants, we suggest you clean your baby's mouth every day. Wipe all around the inside of your baby's mouth with a clean, wet face cloth, or a soft bristled baby toothbrush. This not only helps to keep your child's mouth clean but also helps your child get used to regular cleaning. Additionally, this may also help ease some of the discomfort caused by teething. As soon as teeth start to appear, smear a small rice sized amount of fluoride toothpaste on a wet face cloth, or on a baby toothbrush and gently clean your child's teeth. It's vital to get into the habit of doing this for your baby twice a day. Make sure to encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste, and it is also recommended that you brush gently on your baby's tongue to remove remaining bacteria. Parents should help their children brush their teeth until the child is at least eight years old. Afterwards, the parents need only supervise the brushing and flossing of their child's teeth.



### **Amount of Toothpaste:**

For children who cannot spit, use a rice sized amount. For children who can spit, use a pea sized amount.

### **Snacking between Regular Meals:**

We suggest healthy alternatives for snacking, such as, vegetables, fruits and dairy products. Limit the number of chewy snacks like dried fruit, fruit roll-ups, cookies, biscuits, gummies, nougat, and candy. Try to only drink water between meals, forego sugary drinks, and relinquish the use of sippy cups and drinking bottles unless filled solely with water.

### **Soothers and Thumb Sucking:**

Soothers are often given to infants during times of rest, sleep, or at other times when the baby has been fed but wants to continue sucking. If you choose to give your infant a soother, we recommend that you use the following guidelines:

- Choose the correct size soother for your baby's mouth
- Frequently check the soother nipple for stickiness, cracked or torn pieces
  - If it reaches this state, throw it out and use a different soother
- Never clean the soother by putting it in your own mouth, this can infect your baby with germs that cause tooth decay
- Refrain from dipping the soother in sweet substances such as honey, and maple syrup as this can contribute to tooth decay
- The use of soothers and thumb sucking is not recommended for baby's who have a complete set of primary "baby" teeth
  - Continued use of soothers and suckers can affect your child's speech development, and the development of their mouth and jaw
- Gradually wean your child off soothers by limiting their usage to rest and sleep, and gently removing the soother from their mouth after your child has fallen asleep

### **Regular Dental Visits:**

After the first tooth has appeared or when the child has reached the age of one, dental visits should begin regularly every 6 months. If you have any concerns regarding your child's teeth, make an appointment to see us and we will happily aid you and your child even if the child has not had their first tooth, or reached the age of one.