



CARING FOR MY CHILD'S TEETH

There is often confusion about when babies should start going to the dentist and how to care for teeth at home. The need to care for babies' teeth may start earlier than you think.

When should dental care begin?

Before the first tooth appears. Wipe your baby's gums with a clean, damp washcloth every day to clear away harmful bacteria. As soon as the first tooth comes in brush it with water and toothpaste the size of a grain of rice twice a day. You can use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste around the age of 3. Flossing should begin as soon as there are two teeth that touch.

When can my child brush her teeth without my help?

Most children need for you to brush them or closely supervise until the age of 6 or 7. Brushing should last at least 2 minutes when they have most of their teeth.

When should I take my child to the dentist for the first time?

By their first birthday. The dentist will explain how to brush and floss at this age. Go to a children's dentist if possible. They are usually good at making the visit a positive experience. They are also more familiar with dental issues that are common in young children.

Why does it matter if baby teeth are taken care of if they are going to fall out anyway?

Once bacteria gets into a baby tooth, it can seep through the tooth into the bone. This can cause serious infections that can be painful and even damage future adult teeth.

What is baby bottle tooth decay?

This is when there is tooth decay in infants and very young children. This happens when babies are given a bottle at nap or bedtime with anything in it but water. Milk, formula, and juices have natural sugars in them that can cause decay if left on the teeth. Dipping the pacifier in sugar or syrup can also cause tooth decay.

What should my child eat or drink to protect his/her teeth?

Encourage fruits and vegetables instead of cake, cookies, candy and potato chips. Buy foods that are sugar-free or unsweetened. Encourage drinking lots of water. Water helps wash away food that may be clinging to the teeth. Be sure your child gets lots of calcium to build strong teeth. Milk, cheese, yogurt, broccoli, and oatmeal are some examples of foods with calcium.

It's important to get babies in the routine of brushing and flossing teeth. Get fluoride toothpaste that tastes good. There are musical toothbrushes and other ways to make brushing more fun. Be creative!