



## **Your Baby's Oral Health...**

You should take care of your baby's teeth and gums even if he/she doesn't yet have any teeth. Establishing good dental hygiene at a young age, even for an infant, can lead to a lifetime of good health. Here is some advice on what you need to do to take care of your baby.

### **1st Dental Visit:**

Our advice on when to bring your child to the dentist is "first visit by first birthday". Your child should visit a dentist when the first tooth comes in, usually between 6 and 12 months of age. An examination will be performed of the mouth, teeth and gums and a fluoride varnish is recommended to be applied. The earlier the dental visit, the better the chance of preventing dental problems. Children with healthy teeth chew food easily and smile with confidence. Start your child now on a lifetime of good dental habits.

### **Cleaning Baby's Teeth:**

Starting at birth, clean your child's gums with a soft infant toothbrush or cloth and water. As soon as the teeth begin to appear, start brushing twice daily using fluoridated toothpaste and a soft, age-appropriate sized toothbrush. Use a "smear" of toothpaste to brush the teeth of a child less than 2 years of age. For the 2-5 year old, dispense a "pea-size" amount of toothpaste and perform or assist your child's tooth brushing. Remember that young children do not have the ability to brush their teeth effectively.

### **Baby Bottle Tooth Decay:**



You may or may not have heard of the condition known as baby bottle tooth decay. Serious harm can come to a baby's teeth when bottles filled with juice, milk or formula, are allowed to sit in a baby's mouth for long periods of time. Generally this happens when a baby is put to bed with a bottle. If you bottle feed, make sure to remove the bottle should your baby fall asleep. Drinking juice from a bottle should be avoided. Children should be weaned from the bottle at 12-14 months of age.

### **Thumb & Finger Sucking:**

Thumb sucking is perfectly normal for infants; many stop by age 2. Prolonged thumb sucking can create crooked teeth or bite problems. If the habit continues beyond age 3, we will be glad to suggest ways to address a prolonged thumb sucking habit.

### **Teething:**

From six months to age 3, your child may have tender gums when teeth erupt. In most children, teething causes increased drooling and a desire to chew on hard things. In some children, teething does cause mild pain and irritability and the gums may become swollen and tender. To help this you can vigorously massage the area for a few minutes and/or let him/her chew on a smooth, hard teething ring or cold wash cloth. While most children do not need teething gels or treatment with Tylenol for pain, you can use these products if necessary.

\*References:

ADA-American Dental Association  
AAPD-American Association of Pediatric Dentists