



Programs for Parents, Inc.
Comprehensive Services for Families & Children

YOUR MONTHLY HEALTH TIP FROM PFP

Healthy Teeth

Healthy teeth are important to a child's overall health. Establishing good habits at a young age can help a child have healthy teeth for life; therefore it is important to begin proper oral hygiene in infancy. Some ways to do this are:

- Clean infants gums with a soft, clean cloth at least once a day
- Use a soft bristled infant toothbrush and water to clean infants' teeth which appear around six months of age
- Avoid putting a baby to bed with a bottle as this can cause tooth decay

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry states that children should see a dentist when they get their first tooth and not later than 1 year of age. This visit is a good way for a parent to learn **about risk factors** from the dentist that may include::

- Teeth staining
- Avoiding nighttime bottles of formula or juice
- Promoting a healthy diet
- Proper method of brushing teeth

When a child is 3 to 4 years old they should start using fluoride toothpaste. Teach children to use a pea-size amount of toothpaste so that there is little danger of the child getting too much fluoride if he/she swallows it. Teach children to brush their teeth at least twice a day, explain that brushing after every meal is a good idea. Children need help brushing their teeth until around 6 years of age. Show children the right way to brush teeth:

- Clean the outer surfaces of upper teeth, then lower teeth
- Clean the inner surfaces of the upper teeth, then the lower teeth
- Clean the chewing surfaces
- Proper brushing takes at least two minutes
- Have a positive attitude toward brushing teeth, make it fun
- Sing a song or recite a simple poem as children brush their teeth
- Serve healthy snacks that are low in sugar such as fruits and vegetables

Forming healthy habits early in life can lead to a lifetime of oral health. Visiting a dentist every six months, regular tooth brushing and good nutrition will help reach this goal.

**If you have any questions or concerns
regarding oral health,
please call the Warmline
at 1-800-713-9006
to speak with a pediatric nurse.**

