

Keeping teeth and gums healthy

- Ask the dentist and dental hygienist all questions you have so together you can keep your child's teeth and gums healthy.
- Ask your doctor or nurse for prescriptions without sugar to help prevent tooth decay (also called "cavities"). Use "over-the-counter" medicines that do not have added sugar.
- Encourage your child to rinse with water after taking medications that may cause "dry mouth". A dry mouth can make it easier for your child to get tooth decay.
- Know what is normal in your child's mouth. Lift the lips away from the teeth for a better view of your child's teeth and gums. Look often.
- Follow a daily plan to take care of your child's teeth: brush teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Have your child drink fluoridated water. Use any aids recommended by the dentist or hygienist to keep teeth and mouth clean. Be cautious about the use of a power toothbrush as it may be too stimulating for your child.
- If your child doesn't like a toothpaste flavor or foam, it may be helpful to try different toothpastes until you find one your child likes. If your child does not like foam from toothpaste, choose toothpaste that does not contain "Sodium Laurel Sulfate."
- Avoid offering your child sugary snacks and drinks (juices, pop) and avoid using them as rewards. Look at labels on food products for words ending in "ose" such as "fructose" and "sucrose" and limit their use.
- Do not share utensils, cups and toothbrushes with your child to avoid passing the bacteria which can cause tooth decay. If your child uses a pacifier, do not dip the pacifier in honey or sugar and clean with water only.
- Do not serve juice in sip cups, just in open cups. If you need to put a child to bed with a bottle, fill it with water only.
- If your child knocks a tooth out, attempt to place the tooth immediately back into the socket and seek professional dental care. If you are unable to replace the tooth, put it in cold milk and proceed immediately to the dentist.
- Use seat belts, stair gates, bike helmets, and mouth guards to prevent injury to the teeth and face.
- Bring your child to the dentist for exams and cleanings as recommended based on your child's chance for getting tooth decay. Ask the dentist for dental "sealants" and fluoride treatment to protect your child's teeth from tooth decay.

These actions will help to prevent tooth decay (cavities) in your child.