

## Your Young Child's Dental Health – What You Should Know

The American Dental Association recommends that children be seen by a dentist as soon as their first tooth erupts, but at least no later than the first birthday. A dental visit at an early age is a “well baby checkup” for the teeth.

Parents should be brushing baby teeth as soon as they erupt without fluoridated toothpaste. Supervise tooth brushing to make sure children over 2 years of age use only a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and avoid swallowing it. Children should be taught to spit out remaining toothpaste and rinse with water after brushing. Most children will be able to brush on their own by the age of 6 or 7 years. Parents should be using floss on their children's teeth as soon as any two teeth touch. Cleaning between the teeth is important because it removes plaque where a toothbrush cannot reach. Brush your child's teeth twice a day. The baby teeth are extremely important in keeping a mouth healthy. If a cavity develops in the baby teeth, it grows very rapidly and can lead to dental pain and infection of the underlying permanent teeth. Any drink containing sugar and/or citric acid (all sodas, sports drinks, juices, etc.) make the teeth more susceptible to cavities by lowering the pH of the mouth so bacteria can thrive. Please limit these so your child can have a healthy mouth.

Once the permanent molars erupt (usually around age 6), we recommend sealing the tops of the teeth to prevent decay with dental sealants (see newsletter from July 2011).

Help your children maintain a lifelong healthy smile by providing them with a well-balanced diet, limiting starchy and sugary snacks , ensuring that they brush twice per day and floss once per day, and scheduling regular dental checkups for them.

Please call our office should you have any questions about your child's dental health.