



February is Children's Oral Health Month:

February is Children's Oral Health Month! Oral health is more than healthy teeth. Maintaining good oral health is an essential part of living a full and healthy life. Understanding what causes dental problems, and knowing what you can do at home, will provide protection against dental problems from occurring later on.

Early childhood tooth decay is the number 1 chronic disease affecting young children. Early childhood tooth decay is 5 times more common than asthma and 7 times more common than hay fever. More than 40 percent of children have tooth decay by the time they reach kindergarten. Children with tooth decay in their baby teeth are at much greater risk for cavities in their adult teeth. Tooth decay is preventable.

Parents often assume that cavities in baby teeth don't matter—but that is not true! Tooth decay in baby teeth can cause severe pain and affect the adult teeth as they are being formed, leading to future dental problems.

Keeping Teeth and Gums Healthy

- 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 routine of brushing the teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste—being careful that they do not swallow the toothpaste. Be cautious about the use of a power toothbrush—it may be too stimulating for your child.
- Some children dislike the flavor or foaming action of toothpaste. If this is the case, look for toothpaste without the ingredient "Sodium Laurel Sulfate".
- Avoid offering your child sugary snacks and drinks (juices, soda) and avoid using them as rewards. Look at the labels on food products for words ending in "ose" such as "fructose" and "sucrose" and limit their use. If you need to put a child to bed with a bottle, fill it with water only. This will protect the teeth from being "bathed" in sugar and acid all night while sleeping.
- If your child must take medications, ask your doctor for prescriptions without sugar to help prevent tooth decay. If your child takes "over-the-counter" medicines, be sure that they do not

have added sugar. Encourage your child to rinse with water after taking medications. Some medications cause a dry mouth and can make it easier for child to get tooth decay.



Did you know.....that when a caregiver shares utensils with a child, cleans a pacifier with the mouth, or has other close oral contact; mouth bacteria from the caregiver can harm a child's teeth?

Look for more Oral Health information at this year's annual
Kids' Carnival on February 8, 2014.