

Caring for Your Children's Teeth

Your child needs healthy teeth and gums for talking, eating, and smiling. There are simple things you can do to help your child have a healthy mouth now and in the future! Be a part of keeping your child cavity-free.

What you can do:

- ✓ Before your baby's teeth come in, wipe the baby's gums with a soft, clean wash cloth after each feeding.
- ✓ After the teeth come in, start brushing twice a day with a soft bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- ✓ Once your child reaches age two, brush your baby's teeth once in the morning and once before bedtime. Use a small smear (size of child's pinky nail) of fluoridated toothpaste. When finished, wipe off the teeth until your baby is old enough to spit it out.
- ✓ Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle containing anything other than water.
- ✓ Avoid sugary foods such as candy, soda, sugary cereals, and chips. Avoid sticky foods, such as raisins, fruit roll-ups, or fruit chews.
- ✓ Avoid putting things in your mouth and then putting them in the mouth of your baby. Avoid saliva-sharing behaviors, such as sharing a spoon when tasting your baby's food, cleaning a dropped pacifier with your mouth, or wiping your baby's mouth with saliva. The bacteria that cause tooth decay can be spread from person to person in saliva.
- ✓ Avoid saliva sharing behaviors between children through their toys, pacifiers, etc.

- ✓ Adults can chew sugar-free gum with xylitol in it right after eating to prevent the spread of germs to their children.



Remember:

- ✓ Soda, sweet drinks, candy, and other sweets can cause cavities that hurt.
- ✓ Snacks like cheese, yogurt, fruits, and vegetables are better for your child's teeth than chips, crackers, or cereal.
- ✓ Limit between meal snacks to two a day.
- ✓ Dilute your child's fruit juice with an equal amount of water.
- ✓ Adults can spread the germs that cause cavities. Do not put anything in your child's mouth if it has been in your mouth.
- ✓ Brush your teeth and your child's teeth in the morning and right before bedtime with fluoride toothpaste.
- ✓ Children need an adult's help in brushing their teeth until they are eight years old.
- ✓ If your child has Medicaid or Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), your child also has coverage for dental services.