

# Tips For A Healthy Smile

## What causes tooth decay?

- Germs cause cavities.
- Germs can be spread from parents to infants and toddlers.
- Foods and drinks feed these germs.
- The germs make acids and cause cavities.
- Tooth decay can be stopped if it is caught early.



## How do you prevent tooth decay?

- You are a role model for your child. Brush, floss and have regular check-ups.
- Fluoride can help prevent and heal early tooth decay.
- Your dentist or doctor may suggest these treatments for your child:
  - fluoride drops or tablets – if your water does not contain fluoride
  - fluoride varnish – painted on the smooth surfaces of teeth to heal early decay
  - sealants – liquid plastic painted on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth
- Choose tooth-healthy snacks such as cheese, fruits and vegetables. Avoid “grazing” – snacking or sipping on sweet liquids throughout the day.

# Taking Care of Your Child's Baby Teeth



To learn more about free or low-cost health insurance, nutrition resources and health services for families, call 1-800-322-2588.



## Dental Care Basics for Children Birth to Six Years



**Washington Dental Service  
Foundation**

*Community Advocates for Oral Health*

## Dental Care for Babies

*Teeth start to come in around the age of 6 months. They help your baby chew food and speak clearly. And, they help shape your baby's face and guide adult teeth into place.*



### Teething

- Offer a cold, firm, safe teething object like a teething ring or slightly frozen washcloth.
- Rub the gums gently with your clean finger.

### Cleaning and Brushing

- After teeth come in, gently clean teeth and gums with a small soft toothbrush or clean damp cloth.
- Up to age two, use fluoridated toothpaste only when advised by a dentist or doctor.

### To Keep Teeth Healthy

- If you give your baby a bottle at bedtime or naps give only water. Other liquids can cause decay if left in your baby's mouth while sleeping.
- Make sure that your baby's mouth is checked by age one by a dentist or doctor. Take your baby in sooner if you notice a problem.

## Dental Care for Young Children

### Brushing

- Brush your child's teeth at least twice a day. Always brush at bedtime.
- Use a small, soft toothbrush and a rice-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.
- Brush for at least 2 minutes, brushing every surface of every tooth and the tongue.
- Replace the toothbrush every 3 to 4 months.



### To Keep Teeth Healthy

- Lift your child's lip to get a good look at all of the teeth. If you see white or brown spots on your child's teeth, contact your dentist or doctor.
- When you think your child is ready, let her practice brushing her own teeth – around age 4 or 5. Still brush your child's teeth once daily until she is about 6 to 8 years old.
- Take your child for a dental check-up at least once a year.