

PEDIATRIC SERIES

# Infant Tooth Care

## Brushing and flossing

As soon as your child gets his first teeth, you should begin cleaning them after feedings with a moist gauze pad or washcloth. When your child is comfortable with a toothbrush, brush his teeth twice a day with an extra-soft toothbrush. Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste if your child likes toothpaste. If not, it's fine to brush without toothpaste. Gently floss your child's teeth each day, and pay particular attention to areas where the teeth are close together.

Help your child brush and floss until he's seven to 10 years old and able to effectively keep the plaque off his teeth by himself. After that, check his efforts occasionally. It's a good idea to keep some disclosing tablets on hand. The vegetable dye in disclosing tablets stains missed plaque red and makes it much easier to see.



Use a soft brush with rounded bristles



Water only in bedtime bottles



A great start to a healthy smile

## Fluoride

Fluoride is an effective preventive tool for infants. It's important that we first check the fluoride level of your child's primary source of drinking water. We sometimes prescribe fluoride tablets, and generally recommend fluoride toothpaste and fluoride treatments after cleanings here in our office.

## Baby bottle tooth decay

The most serious dental problem for young children is baby bottle tooth decay, also called early childhood caries or bottle syndrome. It is caused by the constant presence of milk, formula, or fruit juice in a child's mouth during the night, during breastfeeding, during naps, or for extended periods during the day. Use water at these times to prevent this severe decay of baby teeth, and always clean your child's teeth immediately after each feeding.

Children learn best by imitation, so let them watch you as you brush and floss your teeth. Regular praise of their homecare efforts and a positive example will get your child started down the path of excellent oral hygiene.