

Infant Oral Health Care

Submitted by:

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... DENTISTRY ...
Pediatric & General Dentistry

Did you know that 40% of children have a cavity by the time they start kindergarten?

Did you know that according to the Centers for Disease Control, dental cavities is the most prevalent infectious disease in children?

Did you know that the bacteria causing cavities can be transferred from parent to child?

You didn't? Read on! Here are some important facts and tips:

1. Mutans streptococci (MS) is the primary bacteria implicated in dental caries. This bacteria metabolizes sugars which creates acid. When the acid demineralizes (or dissolves) the tooth, a cavity results.
2. Transmission of MS bacteria from parent to child is well documented. Every once in awhile, we hear about a parent who shares spoons with the child or will clean off a dropped pacifier by putting it in the parent's mouth first. Don't do this. This is a very effective way to transmit decay producing bacteria to the child.
3. The greater the levels of MS bacteria in the mother's saliva, the greater the risk of transmission to the infant. Therefore, the parent's oral health is very important in preventing cavities for the child! So Moms.... Take care of yourself, too!
4. Parents should brush the infant's teeth twice per day. There are ways to do this more effectively... ask your dentist about this.
5. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush with a small head, preferably one designed specifically for infants.
6. According to the American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, infants should have their teeth brushed with a "smear" or "grain of rice" size of fluoridated toothpaste. This has been a change from previous policy. Ask your dentists about the details.
7. Using juice in the bottle at night, repeated use of a sippy cup, and frequent snacking of sugar-containing foods or drinks all increase the risk of cavities in children.
8. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that sugar sweetened beverages and juice can cause diarrhea, flatulence, abdominal distention, and dental cavities. The AAP recommends to limit juice to 4-6 oz. per day up to the age of six.
9. Do not put the infant to sleep with a bottle or sippy cup or allow frequent and prolonged bottle feedings.
10. To ease the discomfort of teething, parents may try giving the infant or child a clean teething ring (some infants like a chilled ring), cool spoon, or cold wet washcloth to chew on. Rubbing the infant's or child's gums may also help.
11. Early establishment of a dental home so the parent can learn about all of these things can help prevent cavity formation in the child. Parents should establish a dental home for infants by 12 months of age.

Thanks for reading! More information is available at the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry website (www.aapd.org), and the American Academy of Pediatrics website (www.aap.org)

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