

■ During Pregnancy (Prenatal)

- **Visit Your Dentist:** Germs in your mouth cause gum disease and cavities that can harm your baby. Get your teeth cleaned, checked, and any dental work completed. Your dentist may recommend an antibacterial or fluoride mouth rinse.
- **Hormones:** During pregnancy, a mother's hormone levels increase. This can lead to gum disease, infection, or cavities. Take extra care of teeth and gums for a healthy baby. Brush and floss at least twice a day.
- **Take Your Vitamins:** Take prenatal vitamins recommended by your doctor. Include calcium in your diet for your baby's growing teeth and bones. Calcium can be in tablet form or in many foods such as milk, cheese and leafy green vegetables.
- **Xylitol®:** This natural, low-calorie, sugar substitute can prevent passing cavity-causing germs from mother to baby. It may be found in chewing gum and toothpaste.

■ When Your Baby Is Born

- **Feeding Habits:** Avoid putting baby to bed with a bottle, Sippy cup or while breast-feeding. This habit may cause cavities when your baby has teeth.
- **Germ Spreading:** Sharing items such as spoons, pacifiers, toothbrushes, cups and toys can spread cavity-causing germs.
- **Fluoride:** Ask your pediatrician or dentist about the proper fluoride supplement your baby may need. Fluoride is recommended when your baby is six months old.



■ When The First Tooth Comes In

- **Babies Need Baby Teeth:** Baby teeth are needed for proper chewing, learning to talk, developing jaw muscles and good self image. Healthy baby teeth mean a better chance for healthy adult teeth.
- **Tooth Care:** Start a habit of brushing when the first tooth comes in. Use soft-bristled toothbrushes, washcloths or special toothbrushes designed for babies. It is normal for a baby to cry while brushing. Babies also cry when they are bathed, dressed or changed. With time, your child will appreciate your gentle attention to his/her teeth and allow you to clean without protest. Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste or plain water. Medicines generally contain large amounts of sugar; brush teeth after each dosage.
- **Establish A Dental Home:** When your child is age one, visit your dentist for baby's simple exam (Infant Oral Exam) and parent education.

The Do's and Don'ts of infant dental care

■ Do...

1. Do visit your dentist.
2. Do take prenatal vitamins.
3. Do clean baby's mouth after feeding or bottle.
4. Do ask doctor about fluoride supplements for your baby.
5. Do start brushing right away.
6. Do bring baby to a dentist as soon as first tooth erupts.
7. Do help brush and floss your child's teeth until age nine.
8. Do take responsibility for your child's healthy eating habits.
9. Do soothe the baby with songs, books, toys and love.

■ Don't...

1. Don't smoke, drink or do drugs while pregnant or before pregnancy.
2. Don't postpone dental treatment for yourself.
3. Don't let your baby fall asleep while breast or bottle-feeding.
4. Don't let your child snack frequently.
5. Don't let your child suffer from dental pain (toothaches).
6. Don't soothe baby with a bottle of sugar-containing drinks and juices.
7. Don't pass cavity causing germs to your baby.

■ Pain Free Kids

- **Preventing Pain:** Cavities in baby and adult teeth may cause pain, swelling and infection. Kids with tooth pain cannot concentrate in the classroom, may develop behavioral problems, and are unable to eat properly. Without the ability to eat normally, development of the body and brain suffer.
- **Nutrition/Diet:** Limit the amount of snacking. The longer food is on a tooth, the more likely a cavity will form. Sticky and starchy foods stay on teeth and are difficult to clean off. Sweet foods cause cavities faster. Examples of sticky foods include dried fruits, gummy products and candy. Examples of starchy foods include crackers, cookies and cereals. Bacteria in your mouth eat the food left on your teeth and produce acid that helps make cavities.
- **Hygiene:** Parents and caregivers need to brush and floss their kids' teeth at least twice a day. A child under nine years old is not coordinated enough to correctly angle the toothbrush or hold the floss. Children routinely miss the back teeth. Kids usually are unable to understand the importance of good oral health.
- **Regular Dental Visits:** Establish a good example; continue regular six month dental visits for you and your children. Remember that kids do not have to suffer from tooth pain. Parents are responsible for their children's well being.
- **Positive Attitude Toward Oral Health:** Always speak positively about oral health and dentistry to your children – your attitude is their attitude!

If you need a dentist referral, please call the Sacramento District Dental Society
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