

# ORAL HEALTH TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

*Children's teeth are important for eating, speaking, socializing and general good health.*

**YOU'RE NOT HEALTHY UNLESS YOUR MOUTH IS!**

## Birth through one year



- ❑ Germs cause cavities. These germs can spread from your mouth to your baby's teeth. Take good care of your own teeth and gums and remember that you are a role model for your child; Brush with fluoride toothpaste, floss and have regular check-ups!
- ❑ Drink fluoridated water. Most water districts are fluoridated in King County. Check with your dentist.
- ❑ Clean teeth daily with a washcloth or soft brush.
- ❑ If you put your baby in bed with a bottle fill it with water. Milk or juice sticks to the baby's teeth at night and can cause cavities.
- ❑ Encourage an infant to drink from a cup beginning at nine months of age.
- ❑ A child's first tooth comes in at around six months. Give baby cold, firm, safe teething objects to chew.
- ❑ Starting at the age of one, then yearly, children should see a doctor or dentist for an oral health exam (a "tooth check-up").



## One year through five years

- ❑ Check your baby's teeth and gums often - "lift the lip". Watch for changes in your baby's teeth.
- ❑ Visit the dentist/dental hygienist/doctor at one year of age.
- ❑ Offer your child healthy food and drinks such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, cheese and water everyday. Limit sugary snacks and juice.
- ❑ Discontinue bottle feeding and use only a cup after 12 months of age.
- ❑ Brush your child's teeth twice a day. Use a small soft toothbrush and a rice grain size amount of fluoride toothpaste. You can begin to teach your child how to properly brush his own teeth when you think he is ready, usually at about age 4 or 5. You should still continue to supervise your child's brushing until age 7 or 8.
- ❑ Ask your dentist or doctor to apply fluoride two or three times a year.
- ❑ Prevent thumb sucking that lasts beyond a child's fourth year.



## Six years and beyond

- ❑ Primary (baby) teeth begin to fall out. Some of them may remain until a child is 11 or 12.
- ❑ Ask your dentist or doctor to apply fluoride two or three times a year
- ❑ Have sealants placed on first permanent molars as soon as they erupt, usually around the age of six.
- ❑ Encourage the use of mouth guards when playing sports.
- ❑ Supervise your child's daily tooth brushing.



If you need help finding a dentist, in King County call Carol A. Allen at (206) 296-0959 or Community Health Access Program (CHAP) at 1-800-756-5437. Statewide, call WithinReach at 1-800-322-2588

**PH** Public Health  
Seattle & King County  
KIDS GET CARE PROGRAM

 City of Seattle  King County

Source: King County Health Action Plan – Public Health – Seattle & King County