

# Smilematters

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## PATIENT FACT SHEET

# It's National Childrens Dental Health Month!

Together, you and your Michigan Dental Association dentist can help your child "Smile On!" during National Children's Dental Health Month and all year 'round. Here are some easy tips for you to help your child with that bright and happy smile.

- If your child relies on a bottle during bed-times or at naps, make sure you use only water in the bottle. Giving your child a bottle of sweetened liquid, such as milk, formula, juice or soda pop, may lead to tooth decay.
- To prevent decay, wipe your baby's gums with a clean gauze pad after feedings.
- As soon as the first tooth comes in, begin brushing with a little water and continue to clean the gums that remain toothless.
- Help your child brush and be sure to use only a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. Teach them to spit out toothpaste and to rinse with water.

### Fluoride

Ask your dentist if your child is getting enough fluoride. Fluoride is nature's cavity fighter and has been proven to prevent tooth decay, as well as to reverse the early decay process and create a tooth surface that is more resistant to decay.

### First Dental Visit

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, as well as the American Dental Association, recommends that children should visit the dentist before their first birthday. By starting at an early age, your dentist can help prevent problems and teach good dental habits that will last a lifetime.

### Teething Pain

Pain from teething can usually be soothed by gently rubbing the gums with a clean finger, wet gauze or a small, cool spoon.

### Thumb Sucking

Children should stop thumb sucking by the time the permanent front teeth are ready to come in. Most children stop between the ages of two and

four years.

### Primary Teeth

When your child begins losing his or her primary teeth, consult with your dentist about the need for a space maintainer to avoid crowding.

### Dental Sealants

Ask your dentist how your child might benefit from sealants. A dental sealant is a clear material applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth to protect teeth from decay.

### Mouthguards

Ask your dentist for advice on the proper mouth guard for your child's activities to help prevent serious injuries to your child's face, tongue, lips, and teeth.

### Role Model

Set a good example for your child! Brush your own teeth twice a day and floss once a day. Be positive about dental visits and visit your dentist regularly.

For more ways to keep your entire family smiling on, talk with your Michigan Dental Association member dentist. And smile on!

## In Summary

- Avoid giving your child sweetened liquids.
- Brush your child's teeth twice a day and floss once a day.
- Make sure your child gets enough fluoride.
- Start regular dental visits by age one.
- Ask your dentist for advice on sealants and mouthguards.
- Let your dentist know about your child's health.
- Set a good example for your child!