



Helping Hands

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3-6 YEARS OLD

CARE

Your child will now, most likely have all twenty of their baby (primary) teeth. Twice daily brushing of your baby's teeth should remain the caregiver's responsibility until fine motor skills are adequately developed to remove dental plaque, usually around 6-8 years of age. Flossing should begin anytime two teeth are touching together. This is most likely occurring with your child's back molars. Conventional dental floss or hand held flossers should be used daily. Your pediatric dentist will be able to guide you with positioning instructions and proper brushing techniques. At this age, we recommend an adult placing a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste on the child's toothbrush twice a day when brushing. The excess toothpaste should simply be spit out of the mouth and not rinsed with water, as this can decrease its protective benefit.

DIET

Your child should be drinking from a cup and not a sippy cup at this age. If a sippy cup needs to be used when traveling, please only fill it with water. Juices, even watered down juices, should only be offered in a regular cup. Your child should be eating three meals a day and two snacks, with any beverages other than water being limited to these times. The frequency of carbohydrate exposure is more strongly linked to the progression of dental decay at this time than the type of carbohydrates. These periods of time in between meals and snacks will allow your child's body to do its share in cavity prevention by allowing the saliva to rinse away the carbohydrates and equalize the acid levels in the mouth to a healthy environment. Some healthy snack options include: Cheeses, nuts, fresh fruits and vegetables, popcorn, solid chocolates, ice cream, and yogurt. Try to steer clear of crackers, dried fruits, gummy fruit snacks, sticky candy and mints, sugar gum, suckers, sodas and sports drinks.

SUCKING HABITS

Your child may have already stopped a previous habit on their own. Prolonged thumb, finger, or pacifier sucking can create crowded, crooked teeth and bite problems. Your pediatric dentist will monitor the way your child's teeth come in and jaws develop, and provide recommendations if the habit still persists at this age.

EMERGENCIES

As your child continues to explore the world around them, mouth injuries are likely to occur. If your child does fall and injure themselves, remain calm, apply pressure to the bleeding area, and contact your pediatric dentist. It is important to establish a relationship with a pediatric dentist early in your child's life, so you will have a place to go where your child already feels safe and the medical and dental history are well known.