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Tips For Caring for Your Toddler's Teeth

- Brush your child's teeth twice a day (nighttime being the most important time) with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste once the first tooth erupts.
- Use a smear of fluoride toothpaste for children under the age of 3 (use a fluoridated toothpaste as soon as the first tooth erupts. They will swallow this small amount but that's okay.)
- Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste for children age 3-6
- Minimize or eliminate rinsing after brushing in order to avoid rinsing the vitamins (fluoride) off the teeth.
- Help your child brush until they are age 7 or can write in cursive (at this point they have the manual dexterity to brush all surfaces well). They will need help flossing until age 10-11.
- Nothing to eat or drink after brushing at night with the exception of water. **NEVER** anything to bed except for water. Be careful with on demand breastfeeding once solids are introduced to the child's diet. This causes an increased risk of cavities.
- Try having children lie down on the floor to brush their teeth. You can sit with their head in your lap. I love this because you can really see what you are doing. It's great for flossing too!
- Floss your child's teeth as soon as the back molars are touching (typically around age 3).
- Avoid high frequency consumption of liquids and foods containing sugar (limiting fruit juice to 4-6 oz. per day, be very careful with chocolate/strawberry milk too). I recommend that children drink white milk or water 90% of the time and keep juice and flavored milks as treats only! Gatorade/Powerade also have a lot of sugar in them!
- Encourage children to drink from a cup as they approach their 1st birthday. Wean from the bottle by 12 months (no later than 18 months). Please contact your pediatrician for their recommendations.
- Establish a dental home and have your child see a dentist at age 1.