

We give you
more reasons to
smile

February is National Children's Dental Health Month



Caring for Your Child's Teeth & Gums¹

In honor of **National Children's Dental Health Month**, here is some interesting information about oral health challenges unique to children.

Baby Bottle Syndrome

Baby Bottle Syndrome is now the **number one cause** of extensive tooth decay in children under three years of age – and it is preventable. Sleeping with a baby bottle full of any sweet liquid (juice, milk, soda) is usually the culprit. Don't give your child food at bedtime. If your child needs a bottle at bedtime for comfort, fill it with water or use a pacifier instead.

Too much fluoride can damage a young child's teeth

If too much fluoridated toothpaste is swallowed, it may lead to small, white flecks on the teeth, called **fluorosis** or mottling. Children between the ages of two and six swallow about 33% of the toothpaste on the brush and those between 7 and 16 swallow 20% according to Dr. Tom McGuire, author of *Tooth Fitness*. Start your child off right with the brush alone, until he or she won't swallow the toothpaste.

Begin scheduling regular dental visits for your child at an early age

Children suffer from tooth decay — missed school days, bed days, low activity days. To detect and prevent cavities and other oral health problems, your child should see a dentist as soon as his or her baby teeth appear. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends children see a dentist when the first baby tooth emerges, usually between the ages of six months and one year. This first visit is critical so parents can learn appropriate steps to assist in maintaining their child's oral health.

Tooth Decay is #1 chronic childhood disease

Despite tremendous declines in childhood cavities, tooth decay remains the **single most common chronic disease of childhood**. Healthy People 2000 oral health update shows that 52% of 6-8 year olds have tooth decay — making it five to eight times more common than asthma, (typically cited as the most common chronic condition of childhood). The good news is that, fewer children are experiencing tooth decay overall!

Children need a simpler brushing technique

Children should use a different brushing technique than adults. Children, especially those under the age of four, will benefit most from a simple brushing technique designed for smaller hands and mouths. The **scrub technique** is recommended, whereby all surfaces are scrubbed in small circular motions with the bristles of the toothbrush.



¹ American Dental Association

For more information, visit us on the web at www.cigna.com

"CIGNA Dental" refers to the following operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation: Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. and its operating subsidiaries and affiliates. This document is provided by CIGNA solely for informational purposes to promote consumer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. CIGNA assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations.