

SNOHOMISH COUNTY CHILD HEALTH NOTES

Promoting early identification and partnerships between families, primary health care providers & the community.

Distributed by: Children with Special Health Care Needs Program (CSHCN) and the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)
Contributors: Washington State Department of Health and UW – Center on Human Development & Disability

Oral Health Tips for Parents – Ways Parents Can Protect Their Baby's Smile

WHAT IS ORAL HEALTH AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Oral health includes prevention of cavities as well as care of complex conditions such as cleft lip and palate. Primary teeth permit proper chewing, allow good pronunciation and speech habits, and guide the eruption of permanent teeth. Healthy teeth improve appearance and self-esteem. Parents are your most important partners in providing care to your young patients. The following hints for parents can help you optimize oral health care in a primary care setting. You might want to photocopy or post this list:



"You're not healthy without good oral health." -- Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop

Ten Simple Things Parents Can Do to Protect Baby's Smile*:

1. **Lift the lip** – Once a month look for changes on baby's teeth. If you see white or brown spots on the teeth, or anything unusual, phone your baby's dentist or ask your baby's doctor.
2. **Protect your baby's teeth with fluoride** – Most water supplies in Snohomish County have fluoride. If your child is at high risk for cavities, your baby may benefit from fluoride varnish to make the teeth better able to fight cavities.
3. **Brush daily** – Clean your baby's teeth every night before bed. The younger you start, the easier it is to develop the habit. Clean infant gums and first teeth with a moist cloth or small, soft toothbrush. For babies (that will swallow toothpaste), begin using a small bit of fluoridated toothpaste (the size of a rice grain) if recommended by your dentist.
4. **Limit sugar** – Cavities are caused by bacteria, and bacteria feed on sugar. Limit sugar, juice, and soda-pop. Offer water when your child is thirsty. Limit sticky, sugary foods such as gum and candy for toddlers and older children.
5. **No bottles in bed** – If you must give a bottle in bed, fill it with plain water. Formula, milk, and juice cause cavities if left in baby's mouth while sleeping.
6. **Wean from bottle to cup by one year of age** – Around six months is a great age to start to offer fluids in a cup.
7. **Don't share germs** - Cavities are caused by bacteria that can be spread by saliva. If you have cavities, you have the germs that will be shared with your children. See a dentist to reduce YOUR cavity causing bacteria. Avoid sharing toothbrushes and eating utensils, especially when you have cavities.
8. **Help children brush up to age six** – Brush after breakfast and at bedtime as well.
9. **Have your baby's teeth checked** – Babies should have their teeth checked by their first birthday. This exam can be done by a dentist. Regular dental care should start at age 1 year.
10. **Take care of yourself** – Your children learn by watching you. Show them that you value a healthy body and a healthy smile. Brush and floss your teeth, make regular dental visits, and take good care of yourself.

* Adapted from: Whatcom Co. Dentist-Physician Partnership Project; St. Joseph Hospital (see www.happyteeth.org)

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Resources:

- American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
AAPD Caries Risk Assessment Tool <http://aapd.org>
www.aapd.org/media/Policies_Guidelines/P_CariesRiskAssess.pdf
- The National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center www.ncemch.org/oralhealth
- Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/oralhealth/
- Bright Futures in Practice: Oral Health http://brightfutures.aap.org/practice_guides_and_other_resources.html
- WA State Dept. of Health: Oral Health Program www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/oral_health/
- Academy of Pediatrics – *Oral Health for Primary Care Providers* <http://www.aap.org/commpeds/doch/oralhealth/>

Washington State Local Health Jurisdictions

- Oral Health Program Coordinators www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Oral_Health/Documents/ohcoor.pdf

SPECIAL NEEDS INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

- **Regional:** Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program www1.dshs.wa.gov/iteip
1-800-927-9308
- Parent to Parent Support Programs of Washington www.arcwa.org/parent_to_parent.htm
1-800-821-5927
- Washington State Fathers Network www.fathersnetwork.org
- Washington State Medical Home Website www.medicalhome.org
- WithinReach www.withinreachwa.org
1-800-322-2588
- **National/Internet:** American Academy of Pediatrics www.aap.org
- AAP Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics www.dbpeds.org
- American Academy of Family Physicians www.aafp.org
- Family Village (Extensive family resources for CSHCN) www.familyvillage.wisc.edu
- Family Voices (Links to national and state family support networks) www.familyvoices.org

Children with Special Health Care Needs
3020 Rucker Avenue, Suite 203
Everett, WA 98201

