

Smilematters

PATIENT FACT SHEET

“A Healthy Smile is Always in Style!”

February is National Children’s Dental Health Month, and your Michigan Dental Association member dentist reminds you to help give your child a healthy smile that lasts a lifetime. A balanced diet, limited snacks, daily brushing and flossing, and regular dental checkups are the keys to a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums.

“A Healthy Smile Is Always in Style!” is the theme for this month’s nationwide celebration. Be sure to ask your dentist for a copy of the Michigan Dental Association Children’s Dental Health Month coloring contest. Meanwhile, check out these helpful dental health tidbits:

Babies and Bottles

Baby teeth are very important for chewing, speaking and appearance. One serious form of children’s tooth decay is baby bottle tooth decay. This condition is caused by frequent and prolonged exposure of an infant’s teeth to liquids containing sugar, such as milk (including breast milk), formula, fruit juice and other sweetened drinks. If you must give your baby a bottle as a comforter at naptime or bedtime, make sure it contains only water.

Sealing Out Decay

As your child’s permanent teeth arrive, talk to your dentist about having dental sealants applied to protect teeth from decay. A dental sealant is a clear material applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, where decay most often occurs. The sealant acts as a barrier, protecting teeth from bacteria and the acid that attacks enamel.

Accidents Can Happen!

Ask your dentist for advice on the proper mouthguard for your child, whether he or she is playing a contact sport like football or just having fun skating or riding a bike. Active children require proper mouth protection to prevent injuries to the face, tongue and lips. These injuries

The Diet-Dental Health Connection

We all know that good nutrition is essential to maintaining healthy teeth and gums throughout life. Here’s more:

Nutrition and Tooth Development — For strong, decay-resistant teeth, children need protein, vitamins and minerals (especially calcium, phosphorus and proper levels of fluoride).

Nutrition and Tooth Decay — Foods or liquids containing sugars and starches encourage the production of plaque, which produces acids that attack tooth enamel. If you often indulge in sugary or starchy foods or liquids the result may be tooth decay and possibly tooth loss.

Nutrition Habits and Healthy Teeth — Check food labels for sugar content. Eat foods that contain sugars with meals, and avoid between-meal snacks. Avoid sugar-containing cough drops, hard candy and breath mints that stay in the mouth a long time and increase the likelihood of decay. Research indicates that certain foods such as cheese, peanuts, or sugar-free gum may be “tooth friendly.” Eating these foods with or after foods that contain carbohydrates may help counter the effects of the acids.

Sip All Day, Get Decay — Be sure to avoid sipping soda pop all day. It’s not just the sugar, it’s the acid that makes soda pop sipping double trouble!

may include broken or knocked out teeth and even jaw fractures. If an accident does happen, be sure to call your dentist as soon as possible.