

HEALTHY MOUTH, HEALTHY CHILD

Taking care of their teeth and gums are vital to a child's long-term general health. Here are some tips for your child's oral health:

- The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that a child's first dental visit take place when the first tooth appears or by his or her first birthday.
- Clean your baby's gums with plain water and a small, softbristled toothbrush designed for infants.
- Start using a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste on your child's toothbrush between the ages of 2 and 3. Children should spit out toothpaste, being careful not to swallow any.
- Baby teeth are important. Not only do they help children learn to speak and chew naturally, they hold the place for permanent teeth until they are ready to erupt.
- Children should not fall asleep with a bottle in their mouth. Juice and other high sugar beverages should be given in a cup, never from a bottle.
- Let children brush, under your supervision and with your assistance until they can brush by themselves, generally around the age of 7.
- Encourage children to chew sugarless gum and stay away from sticky candy, such as taffy or caramels.
- If your child plays sports, make sure he or she always wears a mouth guard to help protect their teeth.