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GIVE YOUR BABY A HEALTHY SMILE

Our entire staff joins in congratulating you on your pregnancy! This is an important time to take care of your oral health, since good oral hygiene, proper nutrition, and regular professional care are the foundations of dental health for your unborn child. We hope the following advice will be both informative and helpful. If you have any questions, please call us at any time.

OLD WIVES TALES

Calcium is not taken from the mother's teeth during pregnancy. The baby's nutrients are taken from the foods the mother eats, not from the teeth. It is also not true that you lose a tooth for each child. Loss of the teeth is the result of improper diet, inadequate home care, and neglect.

NUTRITION

Nutrition affects both mother and child. A balanced diet during pregnancy will provide the proper nutrients. Deficiencies in the diet may result in malformation of the baby's primary teeth. These teeth begin to form during the second trimester of pregnancy. Always follow your physician's advice about your diet and diet supplements during your pregnancy!

ORAL HYGIENE

Because of hormonal changes that take place during pregnancy, the oral tissue may become more susceptible to a condition known as "pregnancy gingivitis". The gum tissues may become swollen, painful, and bleed easily. The cause of "pregnancy gingivitis" is plaque, the accumulation of bacteria around the gum lines. Control of this condition can only be accomplished by proper brushing and flossing, and it will disappear after your baby is born.

BREAST FEEDING VS. BOTTLE FEEDING

The breast-fed baby is developing, in a natural way, the muscles of the lips, cheeks, tongue, and jaws leading to the proper chewing and swallowing of food. When being fed from a bottle, the action is different. Liquid flows from the bottle in a continuous stream, which prevents the muscles from working as hard and may cause a forward thrusting of the tongue to stop the flow of liquid. A tongue thrust can result in a future malocclusion. The use of orthodontic nipples is encouraged to simulate the mother's breast.

ORTHODONTIC PACIFIERS

Orthodontic pacifiers are an alternative to thumb sucking. They have been developed to simulate the mother's breast and to help prevent malformation of the dental arches. Sucking is a natural reflex, and the orthodontic pacifier can help satisfy this reflex in a way that will not interfere with normal dental development.

FLUORIDE

Fluoride helps teeth to become stronger and more resistant to dental caries (decay). Fluoride supplements can come from fluoridated water or fluoride supplemented vitamins. City of Tampa water is fluoridated to the proper level. We advise you to consult your physician about the advisability of additional supplements. When your child is old enough to start regular dental visits (about three years old), we will begin the topical application of fluoride.

CLEANING YOUR BABY'S TEETH

You should start cleaning your baby's primary teeth as soon as they erupt. At least once a day, use a moist soft cloth, moist gauze, or infant toothbrush without toothpaste. It is easy to see the teeth if you lay the baby's head in your lap. You should assist your child with tooth brushing throughout childhood.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY TEETH

The primary teeth are important for proper chewing, speech, and appearance and to maintain space for the permanent teeth to erupt into the correct position. Restoration of any decay should be done to preserve the teeth for as long as they are retained.

NURSING BOTTLE MOUTH

The most common cause of dental caries in infants is giving your baby sweetened liquids by bottle frequently throughout the day or allowing your baby to go to sleep with a bottle of sweetened liquid, juice, or milk. The constant contact of carbohydrates allows the oral bacteria to form acids which decay the teeth. Pacifiers dipped in honey can have the same consequence. We recommend that the bottle be used only for feeding or to quench thirst, not as a pacifier.

TEETHING

The primary teeth usually begin to erupt between three and eight months of age. This may make your child irritable because it is painful. Simple measures can be taken to comfort your child. Among them are: rubbing the gum with a clean finger; use of a cold teething ring; and use of a dog's chewing toy (these are very hard and be sure that the dog doesn't get it).

PROFESSIONAL DENTAL CARE

Regular dental care for your child should begin at about three years old. The first visit will then be an easy and pleasant visit in a non emergency situation. You can give your child a lifetime of freedom from most dental problems if you practice good preventive dentistry at home and continue a program of regular professional care.