

PREVENTING ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS



GOOD SELF CARE

A program of daily brushing and flossing helps prevent oral health problems. The teeth should be brushed using a soft bristle brush at least twice a day. Flossing between the teeth is just as important and should be done at least once per day. It is important not to forget the back teeth and other difficult places to reach when brushing and flossing.

FLUORIDE

Fluoride is a mineral that strengthens the outside of teeth. Strong teeth resist decay. Tooth decay can be reduced by 50 - 70 percent with ingestion of proper amounts of fluoride. Many community water supply systems (in Connecticut close to 90 percent) add fluoride to their water.

Well water, bottled water, and filtered water usually do not contain the right amounts of fluoride to help strengthen teeth. Some local water supplies are not fluoridated. If your water source is not fluoridated, speak with a dental professional to arrange for other ways to provide fluoride.

SEALANTS

The top surfaces of the back teeth have deep pits and fissures. These are difficult to keep clean and are vulnerable to decay. One way to help prevent decay on these surfaces is with sealants. Sealants are safe coatings that help prevent decay. They are easy to apply and are placed on permanent molars after age 7. Talk to your dentist or dental hygienist about sealants.

FIRST YEAR = FIRST VISIT

Building a foundation for good oral health must start early. During these early visits, the dentist and dental hygienist will assess proper tooth development and check for other problems. By starting early, caregivers can learn steps to ensure good oral hygiene for their children. Through example, children will learn the importance of oral health care and will see that the oral health visit is a very positive experience.

GOOD NUTRITION AND EATING HABITS

Teeth, like bones, benefit from a diet with the right amount of calcium. Eating high amounts of sweets and regularly snacking between meals promotes tooth decay. Having a balanced diet improves overall good health. Oral health is no exception to this rule.

To prevent tooth decay, babies should never be put to bed with a bottle and should not be allowed to drink beverages containing sugars (even milk) all day long. Children should use a cup rather than a bottle as soon as they are able to sit up alone.



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