



## Dental Care

Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic health problems in children, so good dental care is vitally important to overall health. We recommend beginning to brush your child's teeth as soon as they erupt. Initially we recommend using a small child-sized brush with just water on it until your child is 12 months old. At 12 months, you should begin to brush your child's teeth twice a day using a smear (grain of rice) amount of fluoride-containing toothpaste. At age 3, it is recommended to brush twice a day using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.

We also recommend that your child drinks fluoride-containing water (e.g., tap water) instead of bottled water. They should avoid gummy candies and sugary juices since those promote cavities. Finally, your child should see a pediatric dentist between ages 1 and 3 for their first dental checkup.

## Fluoride Varnish

Fluoride is an important mineral for all children. Bacteria in the mouth can combine with sugar and produce acid that can harm tooth enamel and damage teeth. Fluoride protects teeth from acid damage and helps reverse early signs of decay.

Fluoride varnish is a dental treatment that can help prevent tooth decay, slow it down or stop it from getting worse. It does not completely prevent cavities, so we recommend brushing twice a day, flossing regularly and getting regular dental care.

Fluoride varnish is painted on the top and sides of each tooth with a small brush and becomes sticky when it hardens. Your child can eat and drink right after the fluoride varnish is applied. Refrain from brushing or flossing teeth for at least 4-6 hours. The following day, you may resume normal oral hygiene.

