

Nursing Needle



It's time to smile as February is National Dental Month. We all have done it. We say "Cheese" and smile to get our picture taken. But what happens if we don't take care of our "pearly whites". That picture won't look so good.

If you take care of your teeth, they will take care of you. Promoting oral health during childhood establishes a foundation for lifelong health and well-being. Teeth are necessary for chewing food, which in turn makes you healthy and strong. Together with your tongue and lips, your teeth assist you to form the sounds necessary to create words to talk. Teeth also help you smile and look your best. It takes very little work and your teeth can be healthy. Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, after breakfast and especially at bedtime. Brushing properly includes brushing all of our teeth, not just those in the front. Using a circular motion, go round and round until every surface of the tooth from the front, sides and back, and gums, are clean. Find a toothbrush that has soft bristles and change that toothbrush every 3 months. Learn to floss. Dental floss is used to slip in between each tooth and up along the gums to get rid of food that is hidden where the toothbrush can't get. Don't forget your tongue. Brushing of the tongue helps to keep your breath fresh. Brushing of the teeth, gums and tongue should take two minutes.

If we forget to brush our teeth, plaque can build up. Plaque is a clear film that sticks to your teeth. It is a magnet for bacteria and sugar. Plaque will sit on a tooth and eat away at the outermost layer of a tooth called the enamel. If you don't brush and floss properly or limit the amount of sugar drinks, like soda, and sweets, the plaque will continue to eat away at the enamel. That leads to cavities. Cavities are when a tooth breaks down or decays. This is the most common chronic childhood disease. That hole that forms from when a tooth decays can grow bigger and deeper over time. If a cavity is found, the dentist will fix the hole by repairing it with a special material called a filling. If proper cleaning of the teeth has occurred, the dental hygienist (the dentists' helper) will clean and polish your teeth. Sometimes they will even take x-rays of your teeth and show them to you.

Several steps can be done to prevent cavities. Sealants, protective coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of teeth, can be applied by a dentist and is an effective measure in preventing cavities. Another is to be exposed to fluoride through fluoridated water in the community, fluoride toothpaste, and fluoride rinses. Fluoride helps to balance out the harmful effects of sugar on the teeth and mouth. It can also strengthen teeth. Dental visits should occur every 6 months where screenings, x-rays, cleanings, and applications of fluoride rinses and sealants can be applied. Most importantly, limiting the exposure to sugar and carbohydrates to meal times as it is easier for the mouth to bring itself back to a health balance after eating when foods are eaten at once, instead of throughout the day. Sipping a soda or other sugary drinks all day is more harmful than having the full serving at once. Another step is to use cheese to help keep the mouth healthy. Cheddar, Mozzarella, Swiss and Monterey Jack cheese can stop cavities from developing by stimulating saliva to protect teeth from harmful acids. Is that why we like the phrase "Say Cheese"?

Now sometimes when we smile there are empty holes. For most of our students, losing teeth is wonderful as the tooth fairy gets to visit. There are 20 baby teeth that will fall out and in turn, 20 exciting visits from the tooth fairy. Most children will start losing teeth at age 5 or 6. Slowly these baby teeth are replaced by permanent teeth. By the time children are 12 or 13 all baby teeth have been lost and replaced by the permanent ones. There are 28 permanent teeth in all. Between age 17 and 21, the last molars, called wisdom teeth, will erupt and complete the set of adult teeth of 32.

Whether there are empty holes or not, we all want a pretty smile when that picture is taken. So let's all take care of our teeth. It only takes 2 minutes in the morning and 2 minutes before bed.

SAY CHEESE AND SMILE PRETTY!! NURSE BRANDON