

Children's Health

Take A Bite Out Of Tooth Decay

(NAPSA)—A lifetime of healthy smiles starts early, before your child gets his or her first tooth. To help people learn more about oral health issues affecting them and their children, MetLife, which administers dental benefits for over 21 million people, has created an online Oral Health Library at www.whymetlife.com/oralhealth.

The MetLife Oral Health Library has articles, risk assessments and answers to frequently asked questions such as the following:

Q. At what age should I first take my child to the dentist?

A. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Dental Association recommend that a child's first visit to the dental office should occur no later than his or her first birthday.

Q. Is it necessary for me to clean or brush my infant's teeth?

A. Yes. Parents should wipe an infant's gums and teeth after each feeding, using a clean, moist cloth or baby toothbrush.

Q. What is "Baby Bottle Tooth Decay"?

A. According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, Baby Bottle Tooth Decay, also known as "early childhood caries," is caused by prolonged contact with almost any liquid other than plain water. Sucking on a bottle filled with liquids that have sugar in them can cause tooth decay. To help prevent this condition, never routinely put your child to bed with a bottle containing sweetened liquids, do not use the bottle as a pacifier and do not dip pacifiers in sweetened liquids, honey or sugar.

Q. What is fluoride and does my child need fluoride treatments?



You can help prevent tooth decay by brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between your teeth daily with floss.

A. Fluoride is a substance used to prevent or reverse the early signs of tooth decay. Research has shown that fluoride makes the tooth structure stronger so teeth are more resistant to acid attacks, which can break down the tooth structure and cause caries (decay). According to the American Dental Association, the use of fluoride-containing dental products by children under age six should be carefully monitored as ingestion of higher than recommended levels of fluoride by children has been associated with an increased risk of dental fluorosis, which is associated with abnormal enamel development.

Q. What are sealants and should my child have them?

A. Sealants are substances used in the prevention of tooth decay. It has been shown to be a very effective method to prevent cavities on the biting surface of teeth. Sealants are particularly important for children who have a high risk for decay. To learn more about oral health issues, visit www.whymetlife.com/oralhealth. For personalized oral health information, please speak to your dentist.