

Pointers For Parents

Brush Up On Healthy Teeth

(NAPSA)—To help parents brush up on healthy teeth, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released a set of pediatric oral health tips. The simple steps assist parents in taking care of their children's teeth as well as aid in teaching proper dental habits. For example, toothpaste that contains fluoride lowers the risk of decay by 15 to 30 percent and drinking fluoridated water lowers the risk by 18 to 40 percent.

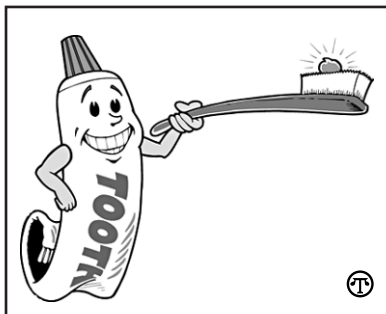
Simple Steps for Kids' Smiles

1. Start cleaning teeth early.

As soon as the first tooth appears, begin by wiping with a clean, damp cloth every day. When more teeth come in, switch to a small, soft toothbrush. Begin using toothpaste with fluoride when the child is two years old. Use toothpaste with fluoride earlier if your child's doctor or dentist recommends it.

2. Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride is important for fighting cavities. If children younger than six years old swallow too much fluoride, however, their permanent teeth may have white spots. To keep this from happening, use only a small amount of toothpaste (about the size of a pea). Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste and rinse well after brushing.

3. Supervise brushing. Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone. Then con-



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tinue to closely watch brushing to make sure the child is doing a thorough job and using only a small amount of toothpaste.

4. Talk to your child's doctor or dentist. Check with the doctor or dentist about your child's specific fluoride needs. After age two, most children get the right amount of fluoride to help prevent cavities if they drink water that contains fluoride and brush their teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

Parents of children older than six months should ask about the need for a fluoride supplement if drinking water does not have enough fluoride.

Do not let a child younger than six years old use a fluoride mouth rinse unless the doctor or dentist recommends it.

For more information on oral health and the benefits of fluoride, visit www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/oh.