

Infancy 0-11 Months Units2



Unit: Fluoride in Drinking Water/Alternate Source of Fluoride

Understandings:

- Fluoridated water is safe and helps to prevent tooth decay.
- Use fluoride toothpaste to brush your teeth.
- Fluoride toothpaste and fluoridated water are both good to have on a daily basis.

Essential Questions:

- Does the water that my family drinks contain fluoride?
- Why does fluoride help prevent tooth decay?
- How do I find out the fluoride level in my water?

Families Will Know:

- Fluoride prevents tooth decay. If there is not enough fluoride in the drinking water, the alternatives are fluoride tablets or drops by prescription. These must be prescribed by a doctor or dentist.
- Some private wells have enough fluoride for good dental health, but most wells do not. Families should tell their pediatrician or dentist if they are on well water.
- If the family's water comes from a private well and their physician wants to prescribe fluoride drops, vitamins or tablets for their baby, they must have the water tested first.
- The use of alternative types of fluoride such as tablets or drops is a daily, long-term commitment.

Families Will Be Able To:

- Demonstrate knowledge of importance of fluoride by knowing the level of fluoride in their water and/or choosing fluoride treatments or enhanced products.

- Tell their pediatrician or dentist about their water source if they are unsure of the fluoride level.

Instructional Activities:

- Discuss the role fluoride plays in the prevention of tooth decay.
- Give handout.
- Discuss the fluoride level of the family's drinking water.
- Discuss alternatives, if there is not enough fluoride in the water.

Fluoride – How It Makes Teeth Stronger

Fluoride is a naturally occurring substance that is present in almost all sources of drinking water. Fluoride is necessary for the proper development of teeth and bones, and it protects teeth once they have erupted into the mouth. Fluoride benefits children before their teeth have come in and it also protects the teeth of children and adults after all of their teeth are present in the mouth. Fluoride can be ingested or swallowed (by means of fluoridated water or fluoride drops and tablets) and it can be applied topically (fluoride toothpaste, rinses and applications in the dental office). When a tooth is exposed to fluoride, it makes it more resistant to cavities.

Ingested or Swallowed Fluoride: Drinking fluoridated water from birth significantly reduces tooth decay. Fluoridation is supported by the American Dental Association, American Dental Hygienists' Association, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association and virtually every other major national and international health and science organization.

When fluoridated water is not available, drops or tablets may be prescribed by your physician. Private wells must be tested to determine their natural levels of fluoride. A child should receive only one source of ingested fluoride: fluoridated water, drops or tablets. Exposure to both sources may cause dental fluorosis, which is characterized by white spots on the enamel. Some private wells have enough fluoride for good dental health, but most wells do not. If your water comes from a private well and your physician wants to prescribe fluoride drops, vitamins or tablets for your baby, make sure that he or she has your water tested first.

Topical Fluoride: In addition to one source of ingested fluoride, any combination of topical fluorides may be used. Topical fluoride, applied directly to the enamel surface, helps provide additional protection against decay after the teeth have come into the mouth. Fluoride enhances the replacement of minerals lost from enamel surfaces and stops decay before it spreads into the tooth.

There are three common methods for applying topical fluorides:

1. Fluoride toothpastes that have the seal of the American Dental Association's Council on Dental Therapeutics on the carton or tube have been proven effective in reducing decay. Only a small pea-sized dab of toothpaste is necessary with each brushing to provide a sufficient amount of fluoride. Because toothpaste can contain high amounts of fluoride, it is recommended that children be carefully monitored so that they do not swallow the toothpaste, which may cause fluorosis.
2. A fluoride mouth rinse (not used in preschool age children because they cannot control swallowing reflex).
3. Fluoride application by dentist or dental hygienist

Unit: Gums and Teeth Cleaning Techniques

Understandings:

- Baby teeth are important.
- Cleaning an infant's gums and/or teeth is important.

Essential Questions:

- Why are an infant's teeth important?
- How should the infant's mouth and teeth be cleaned?

Families Will Know:

- Why an infant's teeth are important.
- Techniques to clean the infant's gums and/or teeth.

Families Will Be Able To:

- Recognize the importance of caring for an infant's mouth and teeth.
- Properly clean the infant's gums and/or teeth.

Instructional Activities:

- Discuss the importance of baby teeth in the present and future.
- Instruction in properly cleaning the infant's gums and/or teeth.
- Discuss lesson: "Gums and Teeth Cleaning Techniques."
- Discuss lesson: "Eruption of Teeth (Teething)."

Gums and Teeth Cleaning Techniques

Healthy baby teeth are important to:

- Help a child learn how to speak properly;
- Help to build a child's self esteem;
- Make sure that there is enough room for the permanent teeth to come in;
- Eat properly;
- Have good general health;
- Sleep well;
- Avoid pain.

Cleaning Techniques:

- Starting the first few days after birth, take a clean, wet cloth and wipe it over your baby's gums after each feeding;
- As baby teeth appear, begin cleaning teeth and gums with a child-size soft-bristle toothbrush and water twice a day.

Eruption of Teeth (Teething)

When baby teeth are about to come in, the child:

- Drools constantly;
- Has fingers and hands in mouth;
- Can be very restless while sleeping;
- Can be irritable and fussy;
- Can have a runny nose;
- Can have a slight fever.

Sometimes the gums may appear blue or purple instead of the usual pink color. Gums return to pink after the tooth comes in. Teething may be most noticeable when the first teeth erupt. Gums are sore, tender and swollen near the area of the tooth coming in.

To help a child who is teething, a caregiver can give the baby a cold, wet washcloth, a teething ring or even a frozen bagel to chew on. This will help relieve the child's discomfort.

Some conditions commonly associated with teething may actually represent an illness or infection. High fever, diarrhea and vomiting are frequently seen with some type of illness.

Unit: Early Childhood Caries

Understandings:

- Using the bottle filled with milk or sugar-loaded juices during the day can lead to Early Childhood Caries (this type of Early Childhood Caries is referred to as baby bottle tooth decay).
- A pacifier dipped in a sugary substance can lead to early childhood caries.
- There are healthy ways to console children.

Essential Questions:

- Why should a bottle or drink cup be reserved for meals only?
- What may be substituted for a pacifier or liquid-filled bottle at bedtime?
- What are healthy ways to console children?

Families Will Know:

- Using a bottle at bed or nap time as a soother allows milk and/or juice to pool around the upper front teeth possibly causing cavities.
- While milk can be used during the day, water should be used at other times. Juice and other sugary drinks should not be given in a bottle.
- A pacifier should never be dipped in a sugary substance for use by a child.
- Healthy ways to console children.

Families Will Be Able To:

- Prevent Early Childhood Caries in their children.

Instructional Activities:

- Discuss “Early Childhood Caries” lesson.

- Give handout regarding Early Childhood Caries.

Early Childhood Caries

When an infant or small child has tooth decay on the top front teeth, this is called Early Childhood Caries. This decay may look like white spots, dark pits, holes or broken teeth and may cause pain and make it hard for the child to eat.

When parents use a bottle to help their child fall asleep, the bacteria feed on the fluid from the bottle. This fluid pools around the upper teeth. The sugar present in the fluid helps the bacteria multiply and create a steady stream of tooth damaging acid. Continued acid results in cavity formation and extensive baby bottle tooth decay.

You can protect your child's teeth by following a few important steps.

Your child should NOT:

- Go to bed with a bottle filled with milk, formula, juice or sweetened drinks such as Jell-O water, soda pop, Kool-Aid or sugar water;
- Sleep all night at the breast after first tooth erupts;
- Drink from a bottle or sippy cup all day long;
- Use a pacifier dipped in honey, syrup or anything sweet.

Your child SHOULD:

- Go to bed without a bottle. If your child must have a bottle to sleep, fill it with plain water;
- Start using a cup at 6 to 9 months and be weaned from the bottle at age 1;
- Suck a clean, non-sugary pacifier, if this is the child's habit.

YOU should NOT:

- Prop the bottle.

YOU should:

- Offer the bottle at feeding time. The bottle is not a toy or a pacifier.

Suggestions to console your child:

- Rock your baby before laying him/her down to sleep;
- Give a soft toy or blanket for snuggling;
- Use a mobile or music box to soothe.

Unit: Sharing Germs

Understandings:

- Cleaning your child's pacifier in your mouth, sharing your spoon with your child or pre-chewing your child's food may transmit germs (*Streptococcus mutans*) which can cause tooth decay in your child.

Essential Questions:

- Why do these germ-sharing practices cause tooth decay?

Families Will Know:

- How germ-sharing practices transmit *Streptococcus mutans* from parent to child and cause tooth decay.

Families Will Be Able To:

- Prevent the transmission of *Streptococcus mutans* to their children and prevent their tooth decay.

Instructional Activities:

- Discuss lesson: "The Transmission of *Streptococcus mutans* Can Cause Tooth Decay."
- Discuss alternate practices to reduce risk of tooth decay.

The Transmission of *Streptococcus mutans* Can Cause Tooth Decay

One of the most important germ/bacteria in dental decay is *Streptococcus mutans* (*S. mutans*). It can be transmitted from the caregiver's saliva to the child's mouth. It interacts with plaque and sugary food to cause decay of the tooth enamel. If the caregiver has much dental decay, he/she usually has high levels of *S. mutans*.

If the caregiver cleans the child's pacifier in his/her mouth before giving it to the child, *S. mutans* is transmitted. Cleaning the pacifier with soap and water prevents transmission.

The caregiver sharing a spoon with the child also can cause transmission of *S. mutans*. Always use a clean spoon which only your child uses. This can prevent transmission.

Pre-chewing the child's food by the caregiver is another method of *S. mutans* transmission. Mash the food with a fork prior to giving food to child instead of pre-chewing. This also will prevent transmission of *S. mutans*.

Many families say, "We all have bad teeth." However, this usually means that the family all has the same bacteria. *S. mutans* can be spread from family members to child as early as 10 months of age. Other methods of transmission can be kissing child on the mouth, sharing toothbrushes, cups and even toys. The child is susceptible as soon as the first tooth erupts. Because it is impossible to not show affection to your child, you should reduce the risk of transmission by having good oral health yourself.

Unit: Your Dental Home

Understandings:

- A dental home is an important part of good oral health.
- Maintaining a dental home is an ongoing process.

Essential Questions:

- What is a dental home?
- Why is it important to have a dental home?
- What behaviors are required to establish a dental home?
- What behaviors are required to maintain a dental home?

Families Will Know:

- The definition of a dental home.
- Why it is important to have a dental home.
- How to establish a dental home.
- How to maintain a dental home.

Families Will Be Able To:

- Discuss what a dental home is and why it is important to have one.
- Demonstrate the types of behaviors that are required to establish and maintain a dental home.
- Problem solve what to do if they cannot get a dental appointment.

Instructional Activities:

- “Dental Home” lesson.

Dental Home

What is a Dental Home?

- Definition of dental home: A dental office or clinic where you and your family feel welcome and have formed a relationship with the dentist and feel comfortable to receive dental care on a regular basis.

Why is it important to have a Dental Home?

- Discuss continuity of care, e.g., someone to keep track of your teeth, check-ups for family members every six months, fewer health problems.
- Discuss advantage of continuity of care:
 - Advice on oral health issues;
 - Keeps teeth healthy and makes you look attractive;
 - Provides current information on the condition of gums, teeth, bite;
 - Watches for germs, plaque, cavities and gum infections;
 - Helps maintain teeth and prevent the need for dentures.

Activity:

- Show pictures of people with unattractive teeth as a result of poor oral health habits.
- Give handout of oral health symptoms which indicate the need for a dental visit.
- Ask question: What does the lack of good dental habits mean for you long term?

What behaviors are required to establish a dental home?

- Discuss chain of events that occur when making a dental appointment:
 - What to say on the telephone;
 - Arrange for transportation;
 - Arrange babysitting.
- Discuss the child visiting the dentist:
 - Do not share any anxiety that you may feel about the appointment;
 - Avoid statements that suggest an unpleasant situation, e.g., "It won't hurt;"
 - Don't bribe the child to go to the dentist;
 - Don't threaten subsequent visits as punishment.

Activity:

- Role play making a dental appointment.
- Give booklet "Going to the Dentist" for children.

Problems finding a dental home?

- Discuss what to do if the first dentist called cannot give a dental appointment:
 - Be prepared to make more than one phone call;
 - For families on Medicaid/ Healthy Start/ Healthy Families,
 - Contact the county Department of Job and Family Services to find a provider;
 - Find out if there is a Safety Net dental clinic in the city or county.

Activity:

- Role play what to do if you can't get a dental appointment.
- Ask question: Where else can you call to find dental care?

What behaviors are required for maintaining a dental home?

- Know the behaviors required for arranging appointments;
- Know how to make a follow-up appointment in the dentist's office or over the telephone.

Activity:

- Develop a plan for appointment schedules.
- Choose a prominent place for appointment reminders.

Visiting the Dental Office

Dental Home Staff Members

- The ***dentist*** is a primary oral health care provider trained in the science of prevention, diagnosis and treatment of oral health disease. Dentists must be licensed by the state.
- The ***dental hygienist*** cleans your teeth and provides oral health education and must be licensed by the state.
- The ***dental assistant*** helps the dentist with dental procedures. A dental assistant works with the dentist at the dental chair.
- The ***dental receptionist*** helps patients schedule appointments, answers the telephone and assists with financial records.

Unit: Dental Injuries

Understandings:

- Parents can care for their children’s dental injuries.
- Parents can prevent dental injuries.

Essential Questions:

- How can parents care for dental injuries?
- How can parents prevent dental injuries?

Families Will Know:

- First aid procedures for dental injuries.
- How to prevent dental injuries.

Instructional Activities:

- Discuss “Treatment of Dental Injuries” lesson.
- Give handout.
- Discuss “How to Prevent Dental Injuries” lesson.
- Give handout.

Treatment of Dental Injuries

Dental Injury

What do I do if a primary (baby) tooth is knocked out?

- Do not attempt to replace the primary tooth in the child's mouth.
- Control bleeding by applying firm but gentle pressure to the area.

What do I do if a primary (baby) tooth is loosened/chipped/or pushed into the gums?

- Rinse affected area with warm water.
- Place cold compress over area to minimize swelling.

See a dentist as soon as possible to see if the injury is more complicated or needs professional treatment.

How to Prevent Dental Injuries

It is very important to prevent injuries to your child's teeth. When the child is very young:

- Do not leave him/her unattended;
- Do not purchase or let him/her use a walker;
- Install gates on stairs;
- Encourage use of a bicycle helmet when riding toys and bikes;
- Have emergency number of doctor/dentist available in a prominent place.

Unit: Lift the Lip: Infancy 0 – 11 Months

Understandings:

- Changes in your child’s mouth can indicate dental problems.
- Knowing what to look for can catch dental problems early.
- Child needs to be seen by a dentist for suspected dental problems as soon as possible.

Essential Questions:

- What changes should parents watch for in their child’s mouth?
- What should parents do if they suspect their child has dental problems?

Families Will Know:

- How to “Lift the Lip” to check for dental problems.
- How to recognize eruption of teeth, white and/or brown spots on teeth, gray colored teeth and teeth with plaque.
- When to seek dental care for their infant.

Families Will Be Able To:

- Successfully “Lift the Lip” to check for dental problems.
- Successfully detect potential dental problems in their child’s mouth and seek dental help.

Instructional Activities:

- Discuss lesson: “Baby Teeth with Plaque.”
- Discuss lessons: “White Spots,” “Brown Spots/Cavity” and “Gray Coloring.”
- Discuss lesson: “Decay/Cavities.”
- Discuss lesson: “Lift the Lip.”

Baby Teeth with Plaque

Plaque is a sticky, colorless layer of germs and saliva that sits on the teeth and gums. When plaque is left on the teeth and gums, it hardens and becomes tartar or calculus. When the germs break down the sugars in the food, acids are formed. This happens for about 20 minutes after the food is eaten. These acids can eat away the enamel on the teeth. The result is damage to the teeth also known as cavities.

To remove the plaque from the teeth and gums, parents should use a damp cloth or toothbrush.

White Spots

The first sign of a cavity starting on a tooth is a “white spot.” These spots are caused by germs in plaque eating away the enamel of the tooth. These spots are found near the gums where plaque sits. They look chalky and white when the teeth are dry. These spots may not turn into cavities if they are brushed and kept clean. This is why it is so important to brush. Fluorosis may also cause white spots. Fluorosis is caused by too much fluoride.

Brown Spots/Cavity

Most brown spots on teeth are cavities, but any brown spot is not normal and should be examined by a dentist. Cavities can be on top of the teeth, on the sides of teeth and on the teeth near the gums. Just because the brown spot doesn't hurt, doesn't mean it's not a cavity. Some spots can be due to injury. A tooth can come in brown if the gums were hurt from a fall.

Gray Coloring

Gray coloring of the entire baby tooth often is caused by some sort of injury. Unless the tooth is painful and loose, there is not much to be done, but evaluation by a dentist is highly recommended.

Another cause of gray teeth is dental cavities. These are often gray spots on parts of the tooth that look dull. Have a dentist look at this spot.

Decay/Cavities

- Bacteria (germs) are connected to dental decay. These bacteria are called *Streptococcus mutans* and do not appear in the mouth of infants until after the teeth come in. Most likely infants become infected from their parents, siblings or other individuals through contact. Usually the mother is considered to be the source. Mothers who have a lot of cavities are more likely to have the bacteria and infect their children.
- Cavities develop in the grooves of the back teeth which are hard to reach when brushing, but where food usually sticks. Cavities also appear on smooth surfaces if not brushed.
- One of the most important factors related to cavities is sugar. Actually, the development of cavities depends on how often the child eats sugary foods, not on the amount eaten. Changing the child's diet to decrease how often sugar eaten is very important.
- In children who still drink from the bottle, one of the most important causes of decay is putting them to bed with a bottle. The sugar from the juice or milk remains on the babies' teeth overnight. Try to give the baby water at naptime or bedtime.
- Fluoride is the most effective measure against dental decay.
- Taking care of your teeth is essential. Parents should brush children's teeth.
- Get your child used to visiting the dentist (dental home).

Lift the Lip

Tooth decay in children under age 3 is preventable. If found early, it can be stopped and even reversed. Parents/caregivers can be taught to “Lift the Lip” to check their child’s teeth for early signs of tooth decay.

Two adults sit facing each other knee to knee. The adult holding the child gently lays them back on the laps so to tilt the child’s head back. This adult can help hold wiggly arms and legs. The head is placed so you can see the four upper front teeth. Now have the adult in whose lap the child’s head lies gently lift the lip.



Focus on the four upper front teeth. This is where you are most likely to find signs of possible dental problems: visible plaque, white or brown spots. Look at both the front and the back of the four upper front teeth, near the roof of the mouth.

As new teeth come in the mouth they will need to be checked the same way.

So what does a tooth problem look like?

1. Visible Plaque is a thick layer of germs and food. Decay starts to form under plaque that is not regularly cleaned away.



2. Early decay first shows as white spots or a white line along the upper part of the tooth closest to the gums.



3. Moderate decay shows as large brown spots that are really holes in the teeth.



4. Severe decay is obvious because the teeth begin to chip off and have a broken appearance, sometimes looking like little dark nubs.



“Lift the Lip” takes only a few minutes. If the child cries or fusses, it’s OK because the child’s mouth will be wide open for viewing.

If you see any of these problems the child should be referred to a dentist. Early problems can many times be reversed with fluoride or repaired by a dentist. If left untreated the child may require hospitalization for treatment.

Remember to “Lift the Lip” and check your child’s upper front teeth at least once a month.