**Oral Hygiene**

- Make an appointment for the infant’s first oral examination within 6 months of the eruption of the first primary tooth, and no later than age 12 months.

- After the initial dental visit, make the next appointment for the infant according to the schedule recommended by the dentist, based on the infant’s individual needs or susceptibility to disease.

- For infants with special health care needs, make appointments for more frequent dental visits as directed by the dentist based on the infant’s needs or susceptibility to disease. Obtain special oral health equipment (e.g., a mouth prop) to brush the infant’s teeth.

- Clean the infant’s gums with a toothbrush and plain water even before the teeth erupt. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush with a small head, preferably one designed specifically for infants.

- Brush the infant’s teeth as soon as the first tooth erupts, usually around age 6 to 10 months, twice a day (after breakfast and before bed). Use a soft-bristled toothbrush with a small head, preferably one designed specifically for infants, and plain water. Lift the lips to brush at the gum line and behind the teeth. Remember not to give the infant anything to eat or drink (except water) after brushing at night.

- For infants at increased risk for tooth decay, consult with a dentist or physician about brushing their teeth with fluoridated toothpaste.

- Familiarize yourself with the normal appearance of the infant’s gums and teeth so that you can identify problems if they occur. Check the infant’s gums and teeth about once a month. Lift the infant’s lips to look for decay on the outside and inside surfaces of the teeth.

- Give the infant 6 months or older fluoride supplements only as recommended by a dentist or physician based on the infant’s risk of developing tooth decay and the known level of fluoride in the infant’s drinking water.

- If the infant has sore gums caused by tooth eruption, give the infant a clean teething ring, cool spoon, or cold wet washcloth. Other options include giving the infant a chilled teething ring or simply rubbing the infant’s gums with a clean finger.

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**Anticipatory Guidance to Share with Parents of Infants (Birth to Age 1)**

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OPEN WIDE: Oral Health Training for Health Professionals – Module 4: What to Do and How to Do It
## Nutrition Guidance

- Breastfeed the infant exclusively for approximately the first 6 months of life, and continue for at least 12 months or for as long as the mother and infant wish to continue. Breastmilk provides the infant advantages with regard to general health, growth, and development, while significantly decreasing the infant’s risk for a large number of acute and chronic diseases.

- For mothers who cannot breastfeed or who choose not to breastfeed, feed the infant a prepared infant formula. No additional nutrients are needed.

- Do not put the infant to sleep with a bottle or sippy cup or allow frequent and prolonged bottle feedings or use of sippy cups containing beverages high in sugar (for example, fruit drinks, soda, or fruit juice), milk, or formula during the day or at night.

- Avoid frequent and prolonged breastfeeding during the night after the infant’s primary teeth begin to erupt.

- Avoid testing the temperature of the bottle with the mouth, sharing utensils (e.g., spoons), or cleaning a pacifier or a bottle nipple with saliva.

- Hold the infant while feeding. Never prop a bottle (that is, use pillows or any other objects to hold a bottle in the infant’s mouth).

- Never add cereal to a bottle. Feed the infant solid foods with a spoon or fork, or, once the infant is able, encourage self-feeding.

- Introduce a small cup when the infant can sit up without support.

- As the infant begins to eat more solid foods and drink from a cup, the infant can be weaned from the bottle. Begin to wean the infant gradually, at about age 9 to 10 months. By age 12 to 14 months, most infants can drink from a cup.

- Do not dip pacifiers in sweetened foods like sugar or honey.

- Juice should not be introduced into infants’ diets before age 6 months. Serve the infant juice in a cup, and limit juice to 4 to 6 oz per day. Serve 100 percent fruit juice or reconstituted juice.

- Promote good eating patterns by offering foods during planned meals and snacks and avoiding offering foods in between.
Nutrition Guidance (continued)

- For infants 6 months of age and older, serve age-appropriate healthy foods during planned meals and snacks, and limit eating (grazing) in between.

- Serve foods containing sugar at mealtimes only, and limit the amount. Foods containing sugar include candy, cookies, cake, and sweetened beverages (for example, fruit drinks, soda, and fruit juice). When checking for sugar, look beyond the sugar bowl and candy dish. A variety of foods contain one or more types of sugar, and all types of sugars can promote tooth decay. (See Module 1, section 1.4.)

- Drink fluoridated water (via a community fluoridated water source). For families that prefer bottled water, drink a brand in which fluoride is added at a concentration of approximately 0.7 to 1.2 mg/L (ppm).