



The Tooth Doctor[®]

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As Parents, We Can All Help To Protect Our Children From Tooth Decay!

Sometimes parents have difficulty judging how much dental care their children need. They know that they want to prevent dental disease and protect their children's teeth, but they don't always know the best way to do so.

As a parent myself, I believe that we're all interested in helping our children remain virtually cavity-free, so they can grow up with healthy smiles to last a lifetime. Fact is, armed with a little knowledge about cavity formation, you can help to save your children from the stress and discomfort of cavity related dental visits.

Dental caries is a lifestyle-dependent infectious disease, and it's the most common chronic infectious disease of childhood. By the age of 6, more than 40% of North American children are affected by dental caries. As many as 50% of children have experienced tooth decay by age 11, and 68% of 19 year olds have experienced tooth decay in their permanent teeth!

When it comes to cavity development, oral bacteria are public enemy #1. Literally millions of bacteria live in our mouths. These bacteria which cause dental caries are able to metabolize sugar, produce a destructive lactic acid, and develop a sticky dental plaque. This destructive acid dissolves the mineral structure of the teeth. If not treated properly, dental caries can lead to severe pain and bacterial infection, which can ultimately lead to extraction of the tooth. Pain and suffering due to untreated tooth decay can cause problems for children in eating, speaking and attention to learning.

To counter the potentially destructive effects of such oral bacteria, effective home-based oral hygiene procedures are essential. Parents need to teach children how to properly brush their own teeth, however because children under the age of 6 or 7 normally don't have the manual dexterity to effectively brush their teeth, parents should always gently re-brush their teeth to assure proper oral cleansing. Remember, tooth decay occurs faster in children than in adults and by brushing your child's teeth you're removing the plaque/bacteria responsible for tooth decay. Teaching your children how to brush properly is extremely important because it will establish good oral habits that last a lifetime.

It's also important to make sure that your children get the recommended amount of fluoride, especially if your household drinking water is not fluoridated because fluoride incorporates itself into tooth enamel making it more resistant to acid attacks. Children need only a pea-sized dab of toothpaste on the brush because sometimes they can get too much fluoride by swallowing fluoride toothpaste. Teach them to spit the toothpaste out after brushing, instead of swallowing it.

Finally, try to make tooth brushing fun rather than a chore which must be done. Enthusiasm is contagious so if you're enthusiastic about brushing your teeth, your children will be too because children are great emulators and tend to want to do the things that their parents do.

Yours for better dental health,

Dr. Frank Gold
DENTAL SURGEON

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