



**littleSmiles**  
*Pediatric Dentistry*

February, 2011

Greetings and best wishes for a blessed and wonderful New Year! As we begin this year, it is important to remind ourselves of some very important facts about our children's oral health.

Caries (Early Childhood Caries) is now the most common chronic disease of childhood in the U.S. It affects more than 40% of children by the time they reach kindergarten. Cavities are the end result of this disease process. It is vital that each child's risk for this disease is assessed at a very early age and at regular visits throughout childhood years. Main risk factors for the disease include high levels of certain bacteria types in the mouth, frequent exposure of the mouth to refined sugars (i.e., sugary liquids and snacks between meals) and irregular brushing and flossing. Also, if a young child's primary caregivers or siblings have recently had active cavities, that child is automatically considered at higher risk for having caries.

Main protective factors against this disease are an established dental home and regular dental care for your children and proper fluoride treatments. The best way to prevent caries in children is to target these main risk factors and have an oral health specialist assess each child around 1 year of age and regularly thereafter as determined by risk level of each child.

Poor oral health can have negative effects on a child's ability to learn, cause the child to miss school and his or her parent to miss work. Caries can affect children's growth, result in significant pain and infection, and diminish overall quality of life.

Infant oral health as well as prenatal oral health is an important foundation upon which preventive education and regular dental care must be built to increase the opportunity for a lifetime free from preventable oral disease. The ultimate goal of the early age assessment and establishing a dental home for each child is the timely delivery of educational information to populations at high risk for developing caries in order to prevent the need for later surgical intervention.

We are whole heartedly committed to do all that we can to promote establishing a dental home for each child in our community by age one and helping each child have positive experiences with oral health that will stay with them throughout their lives. Please call us today if you have any questions about your child's oral health!

Sincerely,

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