You are not born with the bacteria to get cavities or periodontal (gum) disease; these bacteria are passed from one person to another. This transmission can happen through the sharing of silverware or drinks, kissing the baby directly on the mouth, pre chewing your child’s food or placing a child’s pacifier in the mouth to clean it.

**Pregnancy**

During pregnancy hormones can cause your gums to bleed. Unhealthy gums have been linked to low birth weight babies and preterm births. It is important to have a dental visit within the first six months of pregnancy.

- Brush with fluoride toothpaste two times daily and floss one time daily and rinse two times daily.
- If you vomit, rinse with one teaspoon baking soda in a cup of water, this will help decrease the acids in your mouth and protect your teeth.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods and drink water and milk, stay away from sodas and juices.

**Starting off right**

Good oral habits in the beginning will lead to positive habits in the future. Although you cannot see the teeth they are developing prior to the child being born.

- After feedings wipe your child’s mouth with a clean wash cloth.
- Do not place child in bed with a bottle or breast in their mouth. Breast milk, formula, juices or soda pop all contain sugars that can lead to Early Childhood Caries (ECC), also known as Baby Bottle Caries.

**Baby’s First Tooth**

- Primary teeth (baby teeth) are important for many reasons. These reasons include
  - Chewing
  - Speech
  - Hold space for permanent (adult) teeth
  - Appearance

- When children are teething they can drool heavily, other signs include irritability, discomfort, loss of appetite, waking during the night, chewing on toys or fingers. When your child is teething giving your child chewing rings or a cold, wet washcloth. It is not recommend applying an over-the-counter numbing medication.
Once the first tooth has appeared an adult should place a smear of toothpaste on an infant toothbrush and gently in a circular motion brush the tooth two times a day. Once the child has two teeth that touch an adult should also floss between the teeth once a day.

Washing your hands
Lift your child’s upper lip
Look at teeth and gums, inside and outside surfaces
As the child ages and has more teeth check the back teeth
Early tooth decay appears as white or brown spots on the teeth, most often along the gum line if child has frequent acid attacks, an example of frequent acid attacks is a child that has juice in a bottle or Sippy cup.
Contact a dentist if you notice any problems.

When providing your child with oral health care it is best to make it fun, singing a song can help and smiling. Also choose a good time for your infant like right after a meal. Cradle the infant’s head in one arm and wipe or brush with the opposite hand or place the infant on a changing table or bed.

The last item to touch a child’s teeth before bed should be a toothbrush or water, never a snack, milk, formula, breast milk or juice. Show by example let your child watch you brush, floss and rinse your teeth.

Replace your child’s toothbrush every three to four months or after the child has been sick.

Your child’s first dental visit should once the first tooth arrives or by their first birthday. This visit is for the Oral Health Professional to educate the adult on oral health care and to demonstrate brushing; it also helps the child establish a relationship with the health care provider. The child may fuss a bit but this visit will not hurt the child, and if oral health care is happening at home it will be nothing new for the child.