



HEART DISEASE & DENTAL CARE

WHY IS DENTAL CARE SO IMPORTANT?



- Children with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) are at risk of developing an uncommon but life threatening heart

infection (Bacterial Endocarditis) from bad teeth or gums. We all have germs in our mouth. When teeth have cavities or gums are infected, germs can get into the blood stream and travel to the heart lining or valves causing a serious infection.

- Taking care of your child's teeth helps prevent endocarditis and keeps your child's heart healthy.
- Medications in liquid form are usually sweetened with sugar. Children with CHD may have to take these medications for a long time. The sugars collect on the teeth and add to tooth decay.
- Some cardiac medicines such as Lasix® can decrease the saliva, leading to a build-up of plaque on your child's teeth, causing tooth decay.
- Frequent eating and drinking covers the teeth with acid and there may not be enough saliva to remove the acid. This adds to tooth decay. Some children with congenital heart disease can have weak tooth enamel leading to increased tooth decay.
- Children with certain heart problems who have a higher risk of Endocarditis should take antibiotics before dental procedures. If you are not sure if your child needs Antibiotic Prophylaxis, please check with your Cardiologist.
- Dental checkup and required dental work must be completed before your child has cardiac surgery.

For more tips on caring for your child's teeth, talk to your dentist/hygienist.

HOW CAN I HELP CARE FOR MY CHILD'S TEETH?

- Your child should have 2 dental checkups per year, starting as soon as your baby has teeth.
- Begin cleaning your baby's teeth twice a day as soon as they appear. Use a soft baby toothbrush or small piece of soft cloth.
- Do not settle your baby to sleep with a bottle of milk or juice in his or her mouth. Milk, juice and formula all contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay when allowed to sit in the mouth. It is good practice to limit sugary fluids in sippy cups throughout the day.
- Brush teeth at least twice a day. Floss teeth once a day.
- Young children up to 8 years of age need help with tooth brushing to ensure that they have cleaned all tooth surfaces adequately.
- Give medicines **before** brushing your child's teeth.
- Use a tiny amount of fluoride toothpaste to brush your child's teeth. Fluoride helps teeth develop a hard outer shell that is more resistant to decay. Don't let your child eat the toothpaste, since too much fluoride can be harmful.
- Choose healthy foods - good nutrition promotes a healthy body, healthy teeth, and resistance to disease.
- Your child may need braces, and cleaning of teeth is important. Antibiotics may be needed for placement or adjustment of braces. Please check with your cardiologist. Your child should wear a mouth guard for contact sports.



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