

Tips for Preventing Tooth Decay in Children

- ✓ **First dental visit by 1st birthday.** Schedule your child's first dental visit when his or her first tooth appears, or by the first birthday. Maintain regular dental visits for your child from then on.
- ✓ **Avoid sugary foods and drinks.** Provide children with healthy snacks such as fruits and vegetables, and avoid sugary foods and drinks. Give them water to drink between meals.
- ✓ **Brush with fluoride toothpaste.** Brush your child's teeth with toothpaste that has fluoride at least twice a day for two minutes. The amount of toothpaste that goes on the toothbrush depends on the child's age. Children need brushing supervision until seven to eight years of age.
- ✓ **Drink tap water.** 94% of Maryland's public water supply (tap water) contains an appropriate amount of fluoride to help prevent cavities. Make sure your children drink fluoridated water. Most bottled water does not contain fluoride. If you are unsure about the cleanliness of your water, it is OK to filter your tap water with over-the-counter water filters. This will not remove cavity preventing fluoride. If you have well water or if you're unsure if your water supply contains adequate amounts of fluoride, check with your local health department or water board.
- ✓ **Talk to your dentist.** Talk to your child's dentist about a cavity prevention plan for your child. Ask your dentist if your child is getting appropriate amounts of fluoride. Your dentist may prescribe a special toothpaste or fluoride drops or tablets. Your dentist may also recommend fluoride treatments.
- ✓ **Dental Sealants.** Make sure your child gets dental sealants when their back permanent teeth (molars) first come in. Dental sealants cover the surfaces of the molars to protect against cavities. Your child can get them at their dental office or through the Maryland School Dental Sealant Program. Check with your local health department.

For Additional Tips and Resources visit: the Maryland Office of Oral Health at:

www.OralHealth4BetterHealth.org