

## Oral Hygiene Instructions

As soon as your child has teeth it is important to brush his/her teeth two times a day. Please brush your child's teeth after breakfast and before bedtime.

- We like you to brush after breakfast to keep your child's teeth clean until lunch time.
- The last thing that should be in your child's mouth before bed is either a toothbrush or water.

Please brush your child's teeth until s/he is in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Until then s/he does not have the manual dexterity to do an adequate job. Let him/her go first to learn how to brush and exert his/her independence, but always go second.

- Brush gently for two minutes. We highly recommend electric toothbrushes. The battery operated spin brushes do a better job than manual toothbrushes. When children are around 8-10 years old we recommend switching to a Sonicare.
  - Please brush in tiny circles along the gum line. Plaque forms mostly along the gums, so it is very important to keep them clean. If using a spin brush, then hold it near the gums to gently massage them.
  - To brush behind front teeth, hold brush straight up and down. Move tip of brush up and down. Be sure to get to the gum line.
  - For back teeth, brush the cheek side, top of the teeth, and the tongue side.
  - The place children most often miss include the cheek side of back teeth and the tongue side of lower front teeth.

It is important to floss your child's teeth before bedtime.

- When your child's teeth touch together, s/he is at higher risk for decay in between the teeth. Flossing dramatically decreases the risk of cavities.
- We suggest the floss picks for your child. It is generally easier to use in a child's mouth, but use whatever you prefer.
- In order to floss, gently move the floss back and forth, slowly moving it toward the gums along the side of each tooth and back out again.

If you have trouble accessing your child's teeth, we recommend having them lie down on the bathroom rug, sofa, or bed. You will have greater visibility and his/her mouth will open more naturally. If you have an uncooperative toddler, we recommend a two person approach. Two adults sit knee to knee. The child straddles one adult who can pin legs down with elbows and hold the child's wrists. The child's head rests on the second adult who can hold the child's head and brush and floss his/her teeth.

Your child will not remember much before the age of four, so make brushing and flossing a habit in your family even if your child is resistant to it.