

## ***HEALTHY MOUTH, HEALTHY BABY RIGHT FROM THE START!***

Improving oral health for children with special health care needs calls for everyone's support... right from the start. Parents, especially Mom, can begin Day #1, looking in her newborn's mouth. We always hear parents tell about counting babies' toes and fingers. The same inquisitiveness is equally important to look in the baby's mouth.

The parents can see the gums, lips, tongue, and palate. In most cases, all parts of the mouth will look complete and healthy. If the parents have any questions, this is the ideal time to ask the nurse and doctor for information and advice before bringing the baby home. This early step gives parents permission and encouragement to look in the baby's mouth. It also helps parents learn recognize good oral health when they see it.

After the baby comes home and begins nursing successfully, Mom needs to clean the residue of milk or formula from around the baby's gums. She can use a clean cloth, gauze pad, or a finger swab to wipe in and around the baby's mouth. This oral hygiene step needs to be practiced by everyone feeding the baby: siblings, grandparents, caregivers, and especially child care staff.

This action has four essential results for a lifetime of oral health care:

- Mom develops a habit of cleaning her baby's mouth and examining it for any changes
- Parents recognize the signs of teething as they watch the gums change and tiny teeth appear
- Baby develops a comfort with the habit of having something foreign in the mouth
- Baby will grow used to mouth examinations when there is a need for any special treatment and therapy in the mouth from a professional

***Pediatricians and pediatric dentists recommend that each baby see a dental professional by the age of one year. This step is to make sure that the primary teeth (baby teeth) are developing properly and to apply fluoride varnish to ward off tooth decay.***

This link will lead you to a ***Bright Smiles Bright Futures*** pamphlet from Colgate to give to new parents.

[http://www.colgate.com/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/Common/Articles/ArticlePDFs/par\\_0\\_months2.pdf](http://www.colgate.com/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/Common/Articles/ArticlePDFs/par_0_months2.pdf)

Here's the link to all ***Bright Smiles Bright Futures*** four pamphlets beginning with pregnant woman and concluding with oral health tips for toddlers. They can be downloaded from this website in English and Spanish.

[http://www.colgate.com/app/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/OHE/Online\\_Articles/PregnancyThroughToddlerYears.cvsp#0to6](http://www.colgate.com/app/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/OHE/Online_Articles/PregnancyThroughToddlerYears.cvsp#0to6)