



## DENTAL HEALTH TIP

# First tooth?

Dental care should begin as soon as a baby's first tooth appears.

### A lifetime of smiles starts with healthy baby teeth

Some people mistakenly believe primary teeth are not important because they are replaced as the child grows. While it is true that only six percent of a person's "chewing career" is with these teeth, studies have shown that they act as placeholders and are essential for alignment and spacing of permanent teeth. When a baby tooth is lost too early, the permanent teeth can drift into an empty space and make it difficult for other adult teeth to find room when they come in. This can cause teeth to be crooked or crowded.

### Baby's teething timeline

Teeth start forming in the baby's jaw during the first trimester of pregnancy, growing and developing right along with the baby. At birth the baby's twenty primary teeth are already present in the jaws and typically begin to appear when a baby is between six months and one year. Primary teeth usually appear in pairs, with ten on the top and ten on the bottom and should be all in by age twenty four months.

### Grumpy baby?

When teeth first come in, most babies have sore or tender gums. Non-liquid teething rings or a wet washcloth placed in the freezer for thirty minutes may provide some relief. Gently rubbing the baby's gums with a finger can also help.

### Start dental care early

It's important to clean primary teeth to help prevent early tooth decay. Clean teeth with a wet washcloth corner, a small piece of gauze wrapped around your finger, or an infant toothbrush. Toothpaste is not required or recommended until age three and older.