

## **A MESSAGE TO PARENTS**

### **What can you do to prevent decay?**

1. Have your dentist determine the decay risk potential of your child. Although we cannot change our genetic makeup, recognizing your child's risk for decay allows us to utilize the latest in prevention to ward off disease.
2. Routine, consistent daily hygiene is very, very important. Removing plaque from all surfaces means removing the bacteria and subsequent acid that dissolves the enamel, resulting in decay. Brush and floss your child's teeth daily. A clean tooth is the best insurance policy against cavities.
3. Since the primary caretaker transmits decay-causing bacteria to the toddler, family members must have their teeth in tip-top shape! See your dentist, take care of all oral disease, brush and floss thoroughly every day and chew gum with xylitol four times a day to decrease the amount of bacteria transmitted to your infant. Chewing gums with xylitol but no sucrose, such as "Spry" and Carefree "Koolerz", are the best choices. This stimulates saliva and helps eradicate those decay-causing bacteria so you won't pass them along to the toddler.
4. Diet!!! Fermentable carbohydrates are the enemy. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 4 -6 oz of fruit juice a day, only at meals. Eliminate snacks that produce oral acids. Not only fruit juice, but pop, Gatorade, cookies, cakes, chips and crackers all contain carbohydrates that are metabolized into acids, dissolving the enamel. When consumed on a regular basis, decay results.
5. Make sure your child uses fluoridated water and toothpaste. Professional fluoride applications are recommended every 6 months.
6. Give your child xylitol chewing gum such as Spry or Koolerz when they are old enough to safely use it.
7. And most important, take your child to the dentist by age one as recommended by pediatric professionals. We can examine your child for decay risk and educate you on the latest in preventive care. Partnering with your dentist gives you the best chance to provide your child with lifelong oral health.