Preventive Care Tips: Early Oral Health Care

As seen from the chart, the first teeth begin to break through the gums (erupt) at about 6 months, however, this varies from child to child.

As soon as the teeth begin to appear, start brushing twice daily using fluoridated toothpaste and a soft, age-appropriate sized toothbrush. Use a "smear" of toothpaste to brush the teeth of a child less than 2 years of age.

By the age of 1 all children should have a well care visit to a dentist. This visit will establish a dental home for your toddler. The dentist will assess your toddler’s risk for future dental problems and learn about any genetic predictors that may affect your toddler’s dental health. Dentists also educate parents and caregivers on proper oral heath care and warn them about some dangerous practices such as allowing a child to fall asleep with a bottle filled with juice.

It is very important that primary (baby) teeth are kept in place until they are lost naturally. These teeth serve a number of critical functions.

- Maintain good nutrition by permitting your toddler to chew properly.
- Are involved in speech development.
- Help the permanent teeth by saving space for them. A healthy smile can help children feel good about the way they look to others.

For more information about early oral health care: www.aapd.org.
To find a dentist for your toddler contact the WV Dental Association at (304) 344-5246.

What To Expect At The 15 Month Visit

- Your provider will talk with you about your toddler’s continued development and what to expect over the next three months.
- Your toddler may receive one or more immunizations.
- Your provider will talk with you about early oral health care and establishing a dental home.

Throughout the visit, you will have opportunities to talk with your provider about questions and concerns you may have about your toddler. In addition, your provider will give you information on discipline, safety and early oral health care.