



# Dental Care Checklist for Caregivers of Individuals with Down Syndrome

- **Regular dental-care visits (checkups)**

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that your child goes to the dentist at least twice a year. Some children may need a checkup more frequently due to their oral health status.

- **Monitor growth and development of teeth**

It is important to check the growth and development of teeth at every visit. Monitoring when the teeth erupt and shed plays an important role in the overall oral health of each patient. When teeth fall out too soon, space maintenance may be needed. If teeth are delayed at shedding, then extractions may be needed to prevent problems with the underlying permanent teeth.

- **Fluoride**

Fluoride strengthens the enamel of the teeth by preventing the loss of minerals and promotes remineralization. A child should be using toothpaste with fluoride and drinking the city's tap water which contains small amounts of fluoride. Topical fluoride or fluoride supplements may be given to children at the dental office according to each child's needs.

- **Malocclusion (overbite, underbite, crossbite)**

Malocclusion is when the upper teeth don't meet normally with the teeth of the lower jaw. This can cause many problems such as tooth decay, jaw joint issues, gum disease, and problems with eating and speaking.

- **Oral Hygiene**

Getting teeth cleanings are a big step in preventing cavities. Waiting to go to the dentist until your child is in pain may result in the problem being too late to resolve and may lead to more severe dental work. It is important for your dentist to give you dental hygiene instructions, take x-rays if needed, examine your child's teeth and gum tissues, and to examine your child's jaw and bite.

- **Diet**

A diet consisting of sugars and carbohydrates puts your child at risk for tooth decay. Keep track of how much sugar your child is consuming. There is sugar in a lot of foods not just candy and sweets. Your child does not have to give up all food with sugar, but it is important to avoid snacking on sugar throughout the day. Eating three meals a day gives your saliva enough time to strengthen your teeth before the next meal. Limiting the number of snack times while providing a balanced diet for your child will help establish a healthy mouth.

- **Bottles, pacifiers, and thumb sucking**

Thumb sucking and pacifiers are sucking habits that are common in many children. They provide comfort and can be a stress reliever when children are tired or anxious. Either on their own or with the help of parents, children tend to stop these habits as they get older. If their sucking habits continue, then development of orofacial structures can be impaired. Many parents don't realize that these habits can influence their child's oral health. It is important to not let your child fall asleep with a bottle in their mouth. Baby bottle tooth decay is common and can be avoided by starting with good dental habits. It may be detrimental to your child's teeth if they are sipping on juice before bed as well. This gives sugar and bacteria time to demineralize the teeth.