



Which Children May Require Special Oral Health Care?

Oral diseases can exacerbate certain health conditions, especially in children with systemic diseases. Likewise, certain diseases and conditions can create or exacerbate oral health problems. More than 80 craniofacial syndromes have been identified that can affect oral development. Certain oral motor abnormalities or exaggerated reflexes; special diets or poor dietary practices; frequent use of medications that contain sugar, reduce salivary flow or create gingival overgrowth--all can place a child at high risk for dental caries or periodontal disease. Parents may encounter problems trying to care for their child's oral health if there are behavioral problems, reflexes that interfere with toothbrushing, or medical conditions that require frequent hospitalizations or special precautions.

http://www.first5oralhealth.org/page.asp?page_id=432

Tooth eruption may be delayed, accelerated, or inconsistent in children with growth disturbances. Gums may appear red or bluish-purple before erupting teeth break through into the mouth. Eruption depends on genetics, growth of the jaw, muscular action, and other factors. Children with Down syndrome may show delays of up to 2 years.

Malocclusion, a poor fit between the upper and lower teeth, and crowding of teeth occur frequently in people with developmental disabilities. Nearly 25% of the more than 80 craniofacial anomalies that can affect oral development are associated with intellectual disability. Muscle dysfunction contributes to malocclusion, particularly in people with cerebral palsy. Teeth that are crowded or out of alignment are more difficult to keep clean, contributing to periodontal disease and dental caries. Refer to an orthodontist or pediatric dentist for evaluation and specialized instruction in daily oral hygiene.

<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/OralHealthInformation/ChildrensOralHealth/OralConditionsChildrenSpecialNeeds.htm>

Children with disabilities and special needs are at greater risk for health problems, require extra help and rely on others to achieve and maintain good health. Oral health is no exception. A clean mouth is one of their most important health needs for life and will be influenced by your ability to provide necessary support.

Common oral problems, such as tooth decay or gum disease, affect all children. But children with disabilities and other special needs have more oral health problems than the general population. For example, children with disabilities may have impaired cognitive abilities, behavioral problems, impaired mobility, neuromuscular problems (drooling, gagging and swallowing problems), uncontrolled body movements, gastroesophageal reflux, or seizures. These complications can be barriers to adequate oral care and put them at higher risk for developing oral health problems.

http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Oral_Health_Children/

Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and epilepsy are just a few debilitating diseases that plague over nine million children across the United States. While focusing on the developmental, emotional, or physical needs of a child, oral healthcare is often disregarded. For a variety of reasons, children with disabilities are at a higher risk for dental problems such as tooth decay, enamel irregularities, and gum infections. The risk of oral problems can be increased as a direct result of special diets and certain medications.

Absence of education and clinical experience are main factors in the lack of dental care for special needs children. Many graduating dentists are not willing to take the extra time to care for those patients as well as receive low reimbursements from insurance companies.

http://www.curiousparents.com/Family_Health/xq/asp/article.408dental/qx/family_health_article.htm

Teach your child to, 'spit don't rinse' – rinsing with water washes the fluoride toothpaste off the teeth. Not rinsing after cleaning will improve the caries-protective effect of fluoride toothpaste.

Ensure your child has regular dental check-ups. The time between your child's dental check-ups will be based on their needs.

<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/oralhealth-child>