Caring for your child’s smile helps it sparkle for a lifetime. Learn how to nurture and protect it for a strong, healthy start.

1. **Prenatal Care:** Your baby’s teeth begin developing during the fifth week of pregnancy, so nourish them by making the right choices.
   - Choose a nutritionally rich, balanced diet.
   - Get enough calcium, phosphorous and other vitamins and minerals.

2. **Infant Oral Care:** Dental hygiene should start even before teeth come. In fact, teeth are susceptible to decay as soon as they are visible. Here’s how to start on the right track:
   - **Wipe your baby’s gums.** Use a soft, damp washcloth or gauze pad.
   - **Use only water in bedtime bottles.** Avoiding sugary liquids helps to prevent baby bottle tooth decay.
   - **Visit the dentist.** Your child’s first dental visit should happen before his or her first birthday and visits should occur every six months thereafter.

3. **Little Teeth:** Around age 2
   - Help children brush their own teeth twice a day.
   - Start flossing your child’s teeth as soon as there are two adjacent teeth.
   - Use a small, soft-bristled toothbrush with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
   - Visit the dentist regularly.

4. **Big Chompers:** Around age 8
   - Children should be able to brush and floss alone.
   - Adults should occasionally check for a job well done.
   - Continue to visit the dentist regularly.

**Your Child’s First Dental Visit Should Happen Before His or Her First Birthday**

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WE KEEP YOU SMILING
SEE THE DENTIST: Here are ways to make it a happy experience:

- **Mix in some fun.** Combine dental visits with trips to the park, movies or a favorite lunch spot.
- **Think positive.** Avoid using negative words like “hurt” or “shot.”
- **Lead by example.** Bring your child along for your dental checkups so that it’s a familiar place.

**FLUORIDE IS KEY:** This mineral is an essential component for maintaining your child’s oral health.

- Fluoride may reduce dental decay by 20-40%.²
- Make sure to use a toothpaste with fluoride.
- Talk to your dentist about supplements if your community does not have fluoridated water.
- Many Delta Dental plans cover children’s topical fluoride treatments.

**CONSIDER SEALANTS:** Dental sealants applied to the chewing surfaces of molars can act as a barrier between the tooth and harmful bacteria. This simple, effective and pain-free procedure could prevent up to 70% of children’s cavities.³ Children who are at high risk for cavities (those who have had at least one cavity in the past) are especially advised to consider sealants.

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**MAKE HEALTHY SMILES FUN**

*Grin! for Kids* is a new, free kid-friendly resource from Delta Dental. With wacky tooth trivia, jokes and craft projects you can do together – this special issue of our oral health e-magazine offers a lively approach to learning about oral health.

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