



## Suggestions on Oral Care for Ages 6-12

The pre-teen years can be a challenging time for a child's oral health due to the number of changes that occur, including the eruption of permanent teeth. Taking a proactive approach to proper dental care during this time will help ensure children become good caretakers of their own oral health. We suggest the following when caring for the oral health of children, ages 6 – 12:

- **Adult teeth in, baby teeth out.** The primary (baby) teeth will be pushed out by the erupting (adult) teeth.
- **Be aware of discomfort as new molars come in.** Eruption of permanent molars will occur between ages 6 – 9. As the largest teeth, molars may cause your child some discomfort as they erupt.
- **All permanent teeth are developed and in place by the age of 12.** Between the ages of 10 – 12, all permanent teeth will erupt. Adult teeth are often bumpy on the top and generally darker in color.
- **Prevent cavities from developing.** If your child develops cavities easily, our office may recommend sealants be applied to the permanent molars. This will prevent cavities from forming, especially in deep crevices that are hard to reach with regular brushing.
- **Watch for overcrowding teeth.** Pre-orthodontic space maintainers may be recommended between the ages of 6 – 9. Orthodontic treatment also may be recommended due to overcrowding between the ages of 11 – 12.
- **Establish healthy snacking.** Between the ages of 6 – 12, children begin to make eating choices on their own, exposing teeth to many cavity-causing foods. Throughout the day, many children will choose sports drinks, soda and sugary snacks. It is important to establish healthy snacking and pack sensible items in a child's lunchbox.
- **Monitor brushing and flossing.** Parents should continue to encourage brushing twice a day and flossing every night before bed. A child's mouth should be checked at least twice per week to ensure effective care.
- **Don't be a stranger to us!** Keep regular checkups every six months. This allows us to detect early signs of decay and prescribe an effective treatment plan. In addition, during the appointment, we will apply a fluoride gel and remove plaque that regular brushing cannot dislodge. When regular visits are combined with good daily hygiene, young patients experience beautiful, healthy smiles!