



# KidCare

LIBERTY cares about more than just teeth!

## Creating a Dental Home for Kids



A “Dental Home” produces and maintains healthy smiles

### Create a “Dental Home” for your family to ensure life-long oral health with these easy lifetime steps:

**Preventative oral health starts at home.** LIBERTY Dental Plan (LIBERTY) recognizes this and has created a Disease Management Program that is the only one of its kind. This in-home program educates families on the benefits of adopting a proactive attitude towards managing disease through good oral health practices. Families are encouraged to build a “Dental Home” – an environment that encourages members of the family to have regular dental checkups and habitual oral hygiene practices right in their own home.

#### Stage 1 Pregnancy

► **Good pre-natal health of the pregnant mom.**

Have mom's teeth checked in advance of, and during pregnancy – especially the gum health. Have routine cleanings up through and after the birth of the child. Take care of any chronic gum infection as early as possible in the pregnancy to avoid circulating inflammatory agents in the blood affecting the development of the child. This will reduce the bacterial load in mom's mouth making it harder to transmit to baby after birth.

► **Moms with active gum disease should avoid cross contaminating their saliva with the child's mouth.**

Dental caries is an infectious disease. You are accidentally spreading the bacteria to your child by tasting their food, using the same utensils and sharing saliva with your baby via kissing or other oral contact. If the “bad” bacteria that may be in mom's mouth (or other family members) get a “hold” in the child's mouth early, this can lead to baby bottle tooth decay (or “early childhood caries”).

► **Mom: if you have dental problems** such as lots of swollen or bleeding gums, missing teeth, large numbers of fillings, or wear a denture, it is best to use a clean utensil in your baby's mouth, and to avoid getting your saliva in the child's mouth.

#### Stage 2 Newborns

► **After the child is born,** get the child used to water in their bottle at bedtime. No fruit juices or milk products during sleep. Baby bottle tooth decay is a devastating and expensive disease to treat and leaves your child with lots of pain and infection affecting them for a lifetime of dental problems.

► **Visit the dentist at the time of emergence** of the first tooth, or by the first birthday. This appointment will be to observe the baby's mouth and to review with the caregiver/family the best way to proceed with your baby's oral health.



### Stage 3 Toddlers

▶ **When there are more and more baby teeth,** take advantage of paint-on fluoride varnish as performed by the dentist, dental hygienist, registered dental assistant, pediatrician, or pediatrician's medical assistant. Application several times per year of fluoride varnish will prevent cavities and avoid painful teeth abscesses and early loss of the baby teeth.

▶ **If you do not live in an area of fluoridated water,** consider fluoride supplements (like vitamin supplements) to ensure that the teeth are strong and decay resistant.

### Stage 4 Childhood

▶ **At age 6,** have the permanent first molar teeth sealed after they erupt in the mouth.

▶ **Continue with twice annual visits,** including cleaning and fluoride varnish.

▶ **At age 12,** have the permanent second molar teeth sealed after they erupt in the mouth.

### Stage 5 Youth

▶ **Children participating in school sports** should have an athletic mouth guard made to avoid broken teeth during competition, or during bicycle riding. Just like wearing a helmet and head protection, protecting the teeth will ensure a life of good smiles.

▶ **When crowding of the permanent teeth is detected,** consider visiting an orthodontist to determine if braces are

recommended and at what age would be the best time to start orthodontic treatment. In some cases, coverage for this care is only paid after all permanent teeth are erupted (approximately age 11 or older). Other plans may allow for earlier orthodontic intervention as a covered service.

▶ **If one child had early childhood caries** (baby bottle tooth decay), you can still prevent this in your next child by taking the steps outlined here. Do not assume that just because it happened once that it is "destiny" for all your children to have this problem.

▶ **Dental disease is preventable** and has simple causes and risk factors that can be avoided and reduced.

LIBERTY is committed to your family's oral health. LIBERTY seeks to partner with you to create a life of oral wellness for parent and child by providing good-sense dental plans that empower good oral health decision-making.

