Fluoride Recommendations

- Only those who are at high risk for cavities and consume non-fluoridated water need fluoride supplements.
- Before supplements are prescribed, a healthcare professional must evaluate your fluoride needs through water testing.

Eating and Drinking Habits

- Cavities will form if teeth are frequently exposed to sugar.
- Juice, soda pop and sports drinks are some of the biggest causes of cavities.
- Choose water to quench thirst. Sweet drinks should be consumed with meals only.
- Fresh fruits, vegetables and cheese are the best snacks.
- Avoid snacking on crackers, cookies, dried fruit and fruit snacks.
- Brush your teeth after eating, or rinse with water when brushing is not an option.
- Chewing sugarless gum, especially those sweetened with xylitol, is a good way to prevent cavities between meals.

Xylitol is a sugarless sweetener that is widely available in a number of foods, including candies and chewing gum (e.g., Clorets Pure®, Icebreakers Frost®, Stride™ and Trident®). Xylitol reduces the risk of dental caries (tooth decay) by decreasing bacterial acids in your mouth and enhancing tooth remineralization. Research has shown that xylitol is effective in preventing dental caries when 4-10 grams are consumed 3-7 times per day (e.g., 1-2 pieces of gum after each meal or snack).
Caring for Your Mouth

- Teeth are important for chewing, smiling, talking, jaw development and self-esteem.
- The teeth you have now will need to last a lifetime.
- You are responsible for brushing and flossing your own teeth now, but reminders from your parents or caregivers can be helpful.
- Brush with a fluoride toothpaste two times a day and floss daily.

Development of Your Mouth

- By 12 years of age, you should lose most of your baby teeth.
- In many cases, teenagers can benefit from orthodontic treatment (braces) to improve the appearance and function of their teeth and jaws. A dentist can answer specific questions about orthodontics.
- Some adolescents in their late teens experience discomfort from wisdom teeth erupting. These teeth should be evaluated and, in some cases, extracted.

Habits that Affect Your Mouth

- Tooth grinding may be normal, but if you think the grinding is excessive, ask your dentist or healthcare professional about mouth guards to prevent wear of your teeth and jaw joints.
- Grills and oral piercings can damage teeth and gums and cause infection.
- Smoking, drinking alcohol and using recreational drugs are very harmful to your oral and overall health.
- Recent research suggests that people who engage in oral sex have a higher risk for the HPV-16 virus and oropharyngeal cancer.

Mouth Injuries

- Injuries to the teeth and mouth are common, especially for those who participate in sports.
- Always wear a helmet while bicycling, skateboarding, inline skating and playing sports.
- Talk to your healthcare professional about wearing a mouth guard for sports activities.
- If an adult tooth is knocked out, you must act quickly. Pick up the tooth by the crown (the white chewing surface), rinse for about 10 seconds in cold water, and then try to replace the tooth into its socket. If this is not possible, store the tooth in cold milk and see a dentist immediately.