

A Healthy Mouth for Baby



Healthy eating & brushing habits make a difference!

Start Healthy Habits Early

This is the best time to start healthy eating and brushing habits. Baby teeth are temporary, but they're still important. They help infants and young children learn to speak and chew food. Children experiencing pain from tooth decay may act out and are less able to focus and learn. Use these general recommendations to support baby's oral health through the first year. Talk to a dentist about specific questions or concerns.

Supporting Baby's Oral Health

Before Baby Has Teeth

- Feed baby only breastmilk for the first six months of life. If breastfeeding is not possible or baby is not getting enough nutrition, iron-rich formula is the best choice.
- Try not to share saliva with baby. Avoid cleaning pacifiers with your mouth and sharing spoons. Your mouth contains bacteria that can cause tooth decay in baby's mouth.

Once Baby Has a Tooth

- Brush baby's teeth with a rice-sized smear of fluoride toothpaste on a small, soft-bristled toothbrush. Baby should have a new toothbrush every 6 months or when it looks frayed.
- Baby's teeth should be brushed by an adult so that all sides are scrubbed. Baby cannot spit at this age. The small amount of fluoride toothpaste used is safe for baby and protects her teeth.
- Baby should go to the dentist once the first tooth comes in or by age one. Baby should also go to the dentist if you see white or brown spots or stains on teeth. Those are signs of decay.
- Be a great role model by showing baby how you brush, drink water, and eat healthy foods each day

Dentists Recommend



From the first tooth to age three, brush with a **rice-sized smear** of fluoride toothpaste on a small soft-bristled toothbrush.

*Good communication between child care and home can make sure that baby's teeth are brushed with fluoride toothpaste **twice a day**.*

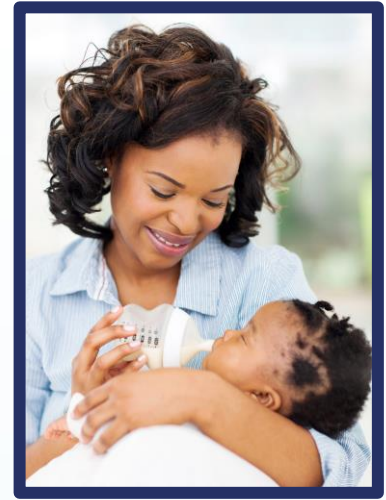
Note: Toothpaste photo from the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center



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Bottle Feeding & Oral Health

- ▶ Only use bottles to feed breastmilk or formula. Mixing cereal into a bottle or feeding juice or other sugary drinks from a bottle can lead to tooth decay and weight gain.
- ▶ Never put baby to bed with a bottle. When left on the teeth overnight, even breastmilk and formula can start to cause decay. Use a soothing sleep routine or a pacifier to help baby get to sleep.
- ▶ Don't dip bottle nipples or pacifiers in sugar or honey. That extra sugar is not good for baby's body or teeth and honey can be dangerous for infants under 12 months of age.
- ▶ When mixing powdered formula, it is safe to use fluoridated water. This fluoride will help prevent decay.
- ▶ Give baby practice with a cup as early as six months. This will help you make the switch from bottle to cup between 12–24 months.



Healthy Foods, Healthy Mouth

When baby starts eating solid foods, usually around six months of age, begin to offer a variety of healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and beans. This will help baby learn to like healthy foods and keep baby's teeth healthy.

Stay away from candy, cookies, cakes, sweet cereal, and other sugary foods. Juice and sugary drinks like fruit drinks and soda are also not recommended in the first year. These foods and drinks take the place of more nutritious foods that baby needs to grow and develop. They can also lead to tooth decay.

Resources Used When Creating This Document

American Academy of Pediatrics. (October 3, 2014). Brushing Up on Oral Health: Never too Early to Start. Retrieved from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx>

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. (2014). Guideline on Infant Oral Health Care. Retrieved from http://www.aapd.org/media/policies_guidelines/g_infantoralthcare.pdf

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Stay Positive with Brushing

It may take some time for baby to get used to tooth brushing. Stay positive and keep it up. Baby will get used to it and it will get easier. Sing baby's favorite song and smile.

Tools for Teething

Babies may feel the discomfort of teething long before you ever see teeth. Baby may be fussy, have swollen gums, or drool more than usual.

Giving baby a cold, wet, clean washcloth or refrigerated teething ring to chew on can help. Avoid teething rings with moving parts or liquid inside that baby could accidentally swallow. Teething gels and liquids are also not safe.

American Academy of Pediatrics. (November 21, 2015). Discontinuing the Bottle. Retrieved from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Discontinuing-the-Bottle.aspx>

US Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles: Helping Your Baby with Teething Pain. Retrieved from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ta-system/health/oral-health/education-activities/healthy-habits.html>

