

Protecting Tiny Teeth

Your baby will get 20 baby teeth. Baby teeth save the space for grown-up teeth. Keep them healthy!



Weaning from the bottle.

- At 6 to 7 months, introduce a cup. Gradually replace each bottle feeding with a cup feeding.
- If your baby must have a bottle at bedtime, fill it with water.
- Offer a cup with meals.
- By 12 to 14 months, most children are able to use a cup and leave the bottle behind.

Tips for healthy teeth.

- Never put juice, soda, or any sugary drinks in your baby's bottle.
- Hold your baby if you are going to bottle feed. Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle.
- Avoid foods high in sugar and foods that stick to the teeth.
- Fruit juice is not recommended for babies under 12 months of age.
- At 1 year of age, give your child no more than 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice per day.
- Do not let your baby or child sip juice, milk, or sugary drinks throughout the day or at bedtime.
- Give your child water between meals.

Do not pass tooth decay germs to your baby.

- Never put anything in your baby's mouth that has been in your mouth.
- Never share feeding spoons, forks, cups, or straws.
- Never chew your baby's food.
- Never clean a pacifier or baby toy with your saliva.

Clean your child's teeth.

- **From birth to under 1 year**, gently wipe the baby's gums with a clean baby washcloth. Once the first teeth appear, gently brush them using a soft baby toothbrush and a "smear" of toothpaste. A "smear" is about the size of a grain of rice.
- **From 1 year to under 3 years**, brush your child's teeth two times per day (morning and night) for 2 minutes each time. Use a smear of fluoride toothpaste until the 3rd birthday.
- **From 3 years and older**, continue brushing teeth two times per day with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. Help your child brush their teeth for 2 minutes until you feel sure that your child will brush all sides of their teeth well.
- Begin flossing your child's teeth once a day when the teeth are touching and you are unable to brush around the entire tooth.
- Do not let children swallow toothpaste.

Take care of your own teeth. Tooth decay germs can be passed from parent or caregiver to baby.

- Visit your dentist for regular dental checkups and cleanings.
- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss your teeth at least once a day.



Did you know?

Germs and sugary drinks and food in the mouth can cause tooth decay.



This is an example of tooth decay in a young child (early childhood caries). It was caused by letting the infant or child use a bottle or cup as a pacifier. The bottle or cup was filled with formula, milk, juice, or a sugary drink.

Tooth decay or cavities in baby teeth:

- Can cause painful toothaches.
- Can cause the child to eat less and wake up more at night.
- Need to be treated by a dentist. Badly damaged teeth may need to be removed.

Take your child for regular dental checkups.

- Children should see a dentist at the age of 1 year for a checkup. If you see "white spots" on your baby's teeth, go sooner.
- Check with your doctor or dentist to make sure your child is receiving the right amount of fluoride.

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