

INFANT DENTAL CARE

My baby doesn't have teeth yet. Why should dental care begin so early?

The most important reason to start taking care of your child's teeth in infancy is the prevention of future dental problems. Early childhood caries (also known as "baby bottle tooth decay" or "nursing caries") can be of great concern and may cause your child discomfort.

Children with healthy teeth chew food easily, learn to speak clearly, and smile with confidence. Start your child now on a lifetime of good dental habits.

The arrival of baby's first teeth



Teething, the emergence of the first baby teeth through the gums, can be a frustrating time for many babies and their parents. It helps to know what to expect when your baby is teething, and what you can do to make the process a little less painful for you and your baby.

Whenever your baby begins teething, you may notice that he seems to drool more, and seems to want to chew on things. For some babies, teething is painless. Others may experience brief periods of irritability, and some may seem cranky for weeks, experiencing crying episodes and disrupted sleeping and eating patterns.

How can I help relieve my baby's teething pain?

- Offer your baby a teething ring, avoid the ones with liquid inside because they may break or leak.
- Let your baby chew on a chilled wet washcloth.
- Rub the baby's gums with a clean finger.

When can I start cleaning my baby's teeth?

The sooner the better! Starting at birth, clean your baby's gums with a soft infant toothbrush and water. Remember that most



small children do not have the ability to brush their teeth effectively. Unless it is advised by your child's pediatric dentist, do not use fluoridated toothpaste until your child is 2 to 3 years old.

If you need additional information, contact the Family Health Line at 1-800-451-BABY (2229)

PREVENTING CHILDHOOD TOOTH DECAY

Tooth decay or cavities in baby teeth can also cause problems such as poor appetite, speech problems, painful toothaches or damaged permanent teeth.

Promote healthy eating and drinking habits:

- Breastfeeding is the best way to feed babies.
- Don't put your baby or child to bed with a bottle filled with formula, milk, juice or any sweet drink.
- Never dip a pacifier in honey, sugar or syrup (honey is especially dangerous and can be toxic if given to a baby).
- Give water between meals instead of a bottle or sippy cup that is filled with formula, milk, juice or other sweet drink.

Take your child for regular checkups:

- Children should see a dentist around their first birthday for a check-up.
- Check with your doctor or dentist to make sure your child is receiving the right (and safe) amount of fluoride.

Regularly clean your child's teeth:

- Clean your baby's gums and teeth every day. Use a clean washcloth or fresh gauze.
- When your child is about 1 year of age, you can use a small, soft toothbrush to gently brush the teeth.
- Brush the teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Do not let children eat the toothpaste.
- Brush your child's teeth after meals or at least twice a day
- Begin flossing your child's teeth once a day beginning at 2 years old.

For more information on Infant Dental Care, visit the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry web site at www.aapd.org or call The Children's Trust Helpline at 211 or 305-631-4211



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