



How can tooth decay be prevented?

- Do not let your child sip on sweet drinks throughout the day.
- Give your child water to drink between meals.
- Do not let baby fall asleep with a bottle that has milk, juice, or any other sweetened drink.
- Monitor your child's teeth by lifting their lips and looking for signs of tooth decay such as white spots. Schedule a dental appointment if you see any signs or have concerns.
- Avoid passing saliva to your child. Do not share utensils such as spoons, forks, and straws.
- Talk to your child's doctor or dentist about possible fluoride varnish treatments.
- Take your baby to the dentist by age 1 to have their first dental check up.

When should I start brushing my child's teeth?

- Start at birth by cleaning your baby's gums with a soft infant toothbrush, cotton gauze, or wash cloth and cool water.
- When teeth begin to appear, use a soft bristle baby toothbrush twice a day and make sure to remove food and plaque. Plaque is a clear, sticky film on teeth.




When should I start brushing my child's teeth with a fluoridated toothpaste?

- Ask your child's dentist before you start using fluoride toothpaste.
- Fluoride strengthens the surface of the teeth, making it harder for plaque to form.
- Your child's dentist or pediatrician may want to apply fluoride varnish.



Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Preventing Early
Childhood Caries

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What are early childhood caries?

Early childhood caries also known as “baby bottle tooth decay” are cavities that develop in a child’s first teeth. While common in children under 5 years of age, prevention and early treatment are key to your child’s oral health.



How does it occur?

Prolonged contact to sugar can damage the surface of the teeth which can lead to cavities.

- Nutritious foods and drinks such as milk, breast milk, and fruit juice have natural sugars. If a child goes to bed with a bottle containing milk, is constantly sipping on juice or eating sugary snacks, bacteria can start to grow on the teeth.

Children can be infected by bacteria through saliva.

- Anyone who has had a cavity in their lifetime, can pass bacteria through saliva by sharing spoons, forks, and straws.

In the first stage of decay, you can see a chalky white color along the gum line of the teeth. At this stage, it may be reversible with good oral hygiene and use of fluoride toothpaste.



Good



Warning



Danger



Emergency

Why are baby teeth important?

- Healthy teeth can help a child to learn how to speak clearly, chew food, and save space for growing permanent teeth.
- Tooth decay can lead to pain, difficulty eating, tooth infections, and loss of school time.

When should I stop giving my baby a bottle?

- Between 12 to 15 months introduce a sippy cup with a hard spout or straw.

When should I take my baby for first dental checkup?

- When the first tooth erupts or by 12 months of age.
- Baby's first tooth will grow out between 6 to 12 months of age.

