

Decay and Your Child's Baby Teeth: How to Keep Them Healthy

DID YOU KNOW??



If a child's baby teeth are healthy, it is more likely his adult teeth will be healthy too. Children who have decay in their baby teeth are more likely to have decay in their adult teeth.



Tooth decay is the **MOST** common long-term childhood disease? Children of any age can get tooth decay, even babies and toddlers. And tooth decay is five times more common than asthma! The good news is that tooth decay can be prevented!

HOW DOES TOOTH DECAY AFFECT BABY TEETH?

Tooth decay, also known as dental caries, happens when a child's teeth come into contact with sugary foods and drinks for long periods of time. These drinks include fruit juices, soda and other drinks with sugar. Decay can begin as soon as a baby's teeth come in, usually by 6 months. This decay can cause pain and the infection can spread. If left untreated, it can destroy the baby's teeth. Tooth decay can also have an effect on a child's general health. If a child has tooth pain, they may have trouble eating. They may not get enough vitamins and minerals to grow up healthy.

➡ *Clean your child's teeth at home*

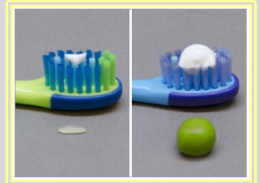
Wipe the baby's gums with a clean, wet gauze pad or washcloth after feeding, before sleep.

As soon as the first tooth appears, start brushing your baby's teeth twice a day (morning and night).

For children under 3 years old, use no more than a smear or "grain of rice" sized amount of toothpaste. For children 3 to 6 years old, use no more than a pea sized amount of toothpaste.

The American Dental Association® recommends that you brush your child's teeth until she is at least six years old. They should be taught to spit out toothpaste, not swallow it.

Use floss as soon as your child has two teeth that touch.



3 years
& under

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years old

➡ *Bottles, pacifiers and breastfeeding*

Infants should finish their bedtime or naptime bottle before going to bed.

Infants should not be put to bed or allowed to fall asleep with a bottle that contains milk, formula, fruit juices or liquids with sugar. Even watered-down drinks can damage teeth.

If your child uses a pacifier, don't put it in your mouth before giving it to your child. Decay-causing bacteria in your mouth can be passed to your baby.

➡ *Training/Sippy Cups*

To lower the risk of tooth decay, try to get your child to drink from a cup by her first birthday.

Training cups should be used only for a short time. Once your child has learned how to sip, the training cup is no longer needed and should be set aside.