



### BABY'S FIRST DENTAL VISIT: WHAT TO EXPECT

The first dental visit should be just before your baby's first teeth come in (average age 6 months). The first dental visit is short and allows for parents to be given instructions to take care of their child's teeth. The dentist may ask you to sit in the chair and hold your child during the examination to get a better look at their teeth.

Your infant will be monitored from their first tooth up until the age of 3, or when they are able to sit in the dental chair by themselves. Their teeth and gums will be gently examined. X-rays may be taken to reveal decay and check the progress of your child's permanent teeth under the gums. They may also have a cleaning and apply topical fluoride to help protect teeth against decay. The dentist will teach you how to brush and floss your child's teeth at home.

### DURING YOUR FIRST VISIT, THE DENTIST WILL:

- Examine your mouth, teeth, and gums
- Evaluate adverse habits such as thumb-sucking
- Check to see if you need fluoride
- Teach you about cleaning your teeth and gums
- Suggest a schedule for regular dental visits

### SOME "FIRST VISIT" TIPS:

- Take your child to "preview" the dental office
- Read books with them about going to the dentist
- Talk to them about what the dentist will be doing during the visit
- Speak positively about your own dental experiences



#### References:

- Medline Plus <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002061.htm>  
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# Baby Bottle TOOTH DECAY

A guide  
to baby's  
dental  
health



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# What is Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?

THE DESTRUCTION OF TOOTH ENAMEL, THE HARD OUTER LAYER OF YOUR TEETH.

A leading culprit in the development of childhood tooth decay is a baby's bottle. Tooth decay happens because bacteria (germs) that live in our mouths use sugar from the food we eat. When these bacteria use the sugar, they make acid. Over time, the acid sitting on the teeth causes cavities (or holes) in the teeth.

Tooth decay is one of the most common childhood diseases. Almost 1 in 2 kids have had decay in their baby teeth. Eating and drinking lots of sugary foods

and drinks puts your child at higher risk for tooth decay. Good tooth care can prevent tooth decay. If baby bottle tooth decay is left untreated, pain and infection can result. Severely decayed teeth may need to be removed. If teeth are infected or lost too early, your child may develop poor eating habits, speech problems, crooked adult teeth, or damaged adult teeth. The chances that adult teeth will end up being crooked are greatly increased.



## WHY ARE BABY TEETH SO IMPORTANT?

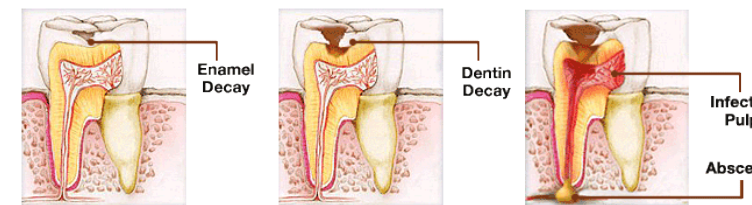
Your child needs strong, healthy baby teeth. These teeth help your child chew food, speak, and have enough space in his or her jaw for the adult teeth to grow in straight. Tooth decay can cause your child pain, make it hard to chew, make your child embarrassed to smile or talk, and can create problems for adult teeth.

# Baby bottle tooth decay is 100% preventable

## PREVENTION

The good news is that tooth decay due to baby bottles is 100% preventable. A few **feeding tips** to avoid tooth decay include the following:

- Put child to bed with bottle of water only – not milk, juice, or other drinks.
- Never fill your child's bottle with fluids that are high in sugar, such as punch, gelatin, or soft drinks.
- Give children ages 6-12 months only formula or breast milk in bottles.
- Avoid letting your child walk around using a bottle of juice or milk as a pacifier.
- Avoid prolonged use of pacifiers and do NOT dip the pacifier in honey, syrup, or sugar.
- Begin teaching your child to drink from a cup at around 6 months of age.
- Try to stop using bottles by age 12-14 months; or use only water in bottles by this age.
- Limit juice to fewer than 6 ounces per day during meals.



## TIPS FOR CARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S TEETH

The good news is that tooth decay due to baby bottles is 100% preventable. A few steps to avoid tooth decay include the following:

- Wipe the baby's gums with a clean gauze pad or washcloth after each feeding.
- Begin brushing your child's teeth, without toothpaste, when his or her first tooth comes in.
- Clean and massage gums in areas without teeth.
- Floss once all the baby teeth have come in.
- Make sure your child is getting enough fluoride, which helps lessen cavities.
- If your local water supply does not contain fluoride, ask your dentist or doctor how your child should get it.
- Once child can spit out all toothpaste after brushing, you can switch to toothpaste with fluoride.
- Brush with soft nylon bristles.
- Inspect your child's teeth regularly.
- Schedule regular dental visits by your child's first birthday. Dentists also offer special sealant coatings, which can help prevent tooth decay in children.



Upper tooth decay

A FEW SIMPLE STEPS CAN HELP AVOID BABY BOTTLE TOOTH DECAY



## EFFECTS OF SUGAR

Tooth decay can happen when your child's teeth come in contact with too much sugar. This sugar helps bacteria grow. Acids that the bacteria make cause the teeth to decay. How often your child drinks liquids containing sugar, and how long the sugar stays in the mouth are also important.



## NUTRITION AND TOOTH DECAY

When children sleep or walk around with a bottle or sippy cup in their mouth, sugar coats their teeth for longer periods of time, causing teeth to decay more quickly.



## BREAST MILK

Breast milk by itself is the healthiest food for babies' teeth. It tends to slow bacterial growth and acid production. However, when breast milk is alternated with sugary foods or drinks, the rate of tooth decay can be faster than with sugar alone.