

Tooth Brushing

0-2 years

- Wipe the gums with a washcloth after feeding. This will help get rid of the sticky coating called plaque that can cause tooth decay.
- Brush teeth twice a day with water and a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Later, children can be given a toothbrush to play with at bath time to introduce the idea of brushing their own teeth.
- Always ensure that toddlers are supervised when brushing – help them to get to hard to reach places and be sure that they spit most of the toothpaste out.
- A babies first visit to the Dentist should happen around their first birthday.

3-5 years

- Start using a children's fluoride toothpaste (contains 400ppm of fluoride) at age 2 – use only a pea-sized amount. Make sure to start coaching your child to spit out instead of swallowing.
- Help your child with brushing – watch them first and then brush for them.
- Try to break thumb-sucker and pacifier habits by age 4.
- Start visiting your dental team every 6 months.



Creating Smiles with Care

Toddlers and Infants



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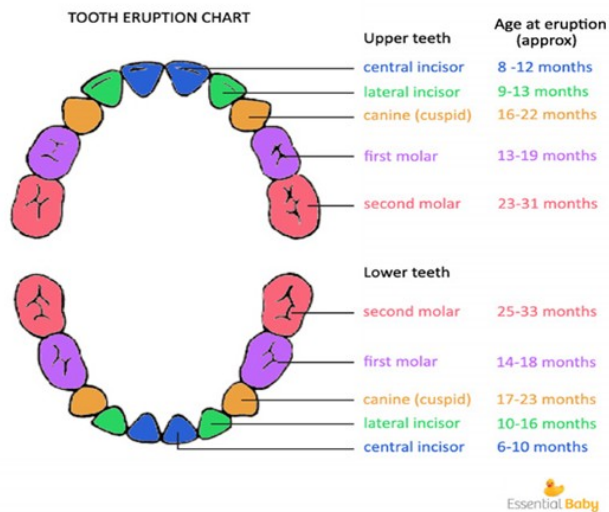
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Infants and Toddlers

Think baby teeth are temporary, and therefore, not important? Think again. Baby teeth are necessary for chewing, speaking, and smiling. They also serve as placeholders for the adult teeth. If teeth are infected or lost too early due to baby bottle tooth decay, your child may develop poor eating habits, speech problems, crooked teeth, and damaged adult teeth. In addition, the chances that adult teeth will end up being crooked are greatly increased.

Deciduous (Baby) Tooth Eruption



Baby Bottle Decay or Early Childhood Caries

Tooth decay in infants and very young children is often referred to as baby bottle tooth decay or early childhood caries. Baby bottle tooth decay happens when sweetened liquids or those with natural sugars (like milk, formula, and fruit juice) cling to an infant's teeth for a long time. Bacteria in the mouth thrive on this sugar and make acids that attack the teeth. Although baby bottle tooth decay typically happens in the upper front teeth, other teeth may also be affected.

The good news is that a few simple steps can help stave off baby bottle tooth decay. They include implementing good oral hygiene at an early age. Here's how:

- 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.
- Schedule regular dental visits by your child's first birthday. Dentists also offer special sealant coatings, which can help prevent tooth decay in children.

Other techniques to help prevent baby bottle tooth decay:

- Don't fill bottles with sugar water and soft drinks. Take the bottle away after your child has finished drinking even if it is milk or formula. Soft drinks are not recommended for children, as they have no nutritional value.

- Encourage your child to drink from a cup by his/her first birthday.
- Never allow your child to fall asleep with a bottle containing anything but water.
- Never give your child a pacifier dipped in anything sweet.
- Reduce the sugar in your child's diet, especially between meals.

It's never too late to break bad habits. If your child drinks sweetened liquids from the bottle and/or sleeps with a bottle, break the habit now and cut the risk of baby bottle tooth decay by:

- Gradually diluting the bottle contents with water over 2 to 3 weeks.
- Once that period is over, fill the bottle only with water.

Remember that healthy baby teeth will lead to healthy permanent teeth.

