

# Caring for Baby's Teeth



## Time for the dentist

Take your child to the dentist within six months of their first tooth appearing or when they are 12 months old, whichever comes first.



### What is plaque?

Plaque is a sticky thin layer of bacteria that can't be seen that can form on the surface of teeth. It's made up of bacteria, food particles and saliva.

### How do you stop plaque?

- ✦ Regular dentist visits and good brushing habits
- ✦ Avoid tasting your child's food with the same spoon that you use to feed them with
- ✦ Limit the amounts of sugary drinks and snacks given to your child
- ✦ Shorter meal times ensure the teeth aren't exposed to food for long periods of time
- ✦ When your care provider okays water for your child to drink, have your child drink water after eating something sugary to rinse the sugar off of their teeth

#### Sources:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/start-brushing-teeth.html#:~:text=Each%20day%2C%20run%20a%20clean,by%20your%20doctor%20or%20dentist.>  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/dental-care-your-infant-and-toddler>  
<https://whitehorsedental.com.au/what-to-do-when-plaque-builds-up-on-babys-teeth/#:~:text=Dental%20plaque%20on%20baby%20teeth,which%20damages%20the%20tooth%20enamel.>

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## Dental Care Dos and Don'ts

### Do's

- Brush or wipe your child's teeth and gums twice a day
- Limit sweetened drinks
- Encourage healthy snacks
- Have regular healthy meals
- Check your child's teeth and gums regularly
- Set a good example: let your child see you brushing your teeth

### Don'ts

- Skip brushing or wiping your child's gum and teeth
- Don't give snacks or drinks after teeth have been brushed
- Avoid regular sweet or sticky snacks
- Avoid giving your baby a drink to go to bed with at night
- Avoid long feeding periods
- If using a pacifier through an informed decision, don't put honey or syrup on it and stop use when all baby teeth are in.

## Caring for Baby's Teeth

New teeth are precious – and your baby needs your help in protecting them. Here are some tips to help you take care of your child's teeth.

Babies need their teeth for:

- ✿ Proper jaw development
- ✿ To hold spaces for their adult teeth to grow in later
- ✿ Healthy baby teeth help children eat and speak clearly

## Teething

Your baby may start teething as early as four months.

- ✿ Your baby may drool more as their teeth come in. You may have to wipe their face more often or put a bib on them.
- ✿ If your baby is fussy, they may feel better if they are allowed to chew on a clean, cold teething ring, teething toy or clean wet face cloth. Teething cookies or biscuits are not a good choice because they can stick to your baby's teeth and cause tooth decay.
- ✿ Your teething baby may have an upset stomach or be more fussy than usual. This is normal.

## Baby's first teeth

A baby's first tooth usually appears at 6 months, and their baby teeth will continue to grow in until they are three years old. Baby teeth are not as strong as adult teeth, so they must be treated carefully. Here are some tips.

- ✿ From the very start, wipe a baby's gums with a clean damp washcloth or infant toothbrush to clear away harmful bacteria
- ✿ As soon as baby's first tooth appears, use an infant toothbrush to brush baby's teeth twice a day
- ✿ Use only a smear (size of a grain of rice) of children's toothpaste on the toothbrush
- ✿ When your baby's teeth begin to touch, you can begin flossing between them
- ✿ Check baby's mouth and teeth regularly for white or brown spots (possible cavities) and red or bleeding gums. Contact your healthcare provider if you find any of these.

## Tooth decay (dental caries/cavities)

Tooth decay is usually caused by eating sugary and sticky foods often, not brushing your child's teeth daily, or drinking sugary drinks too often. When your child eats or drinks sugars, the germs in your child's mouth mix with the sugars and create a mild acid. This acid attacks the hard outer layer of the teeth to form cavities. The longer the liquid stays on the teeth, the bigger the risk of cavities (Ex. sending your child to bed with juice or formula for the night). Sometimes cavity-causing bacteria can come from your mouth to your baby's through sharing a spoon or some other way.

