



Establishing a healthy mouth for your baby

Dental Caries (Dental Cavities)

- In order to have a cavity, three things are required: a tooth, bacteria, and food.
- Bacteria naturally found in the mouth metabolize the food to form an acid. The acid sits on the tooth's surface and creates a cavity.
- While breast milk is not cariogenic (cavity causing), it will act as a medium by which food, plaque, and bacteria adhere to the teeth and can cause cavities.
- If left untreated, dental decay has been shown to cause pain and infection.

Diet Considerations

- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle of breast milk or formula. This behavior increases your baby's risk for tooth decay.
- Avoid all juices (even 100%, all natural), pop, dried fruits, fruit snacks, gummy vitamins, and sticky candy.
- Sippy cups should only contain water or milk (not chocolate milk or juice).

Pregnancy and Your Oral Health

- When planning pregnancies, plan to visit your dentist.
- Maintaining good oral hygiene and a healthy diet is important to a healthy pregnancy.
- Research has shown untreated dental decay and periodontal disease increase the risk of complications during pregnancy such as preterm births and low birth weight.

Teething Recommendations

- Let your baby chew on refrigerated teething rings or a wet washcloth.
- You can give your baby children's Tylenol (recommended dose based on weight) or children's ibuprofen (recommended dose based on weight after 6 months of age).
- We do NOT recommend any over the counter teething gels. Teething gels are ineffective because the topical agent typically does not adhere to the gums and baby ends up swallowing the gel instead. Cases of overdose have been reported.

Taking Care of Baby's Mouth and Teeth

- Prior to the first tooth, you can wipe baby's gums with a wet washcloth. It is not necessary, but starts a routine that can lead to good brushing habits. Establish a brushing routine as soon as the first tooth erupts.
- Brush the teeth twice daily, once in the morning and before bedtime.
- Use an age-appropriate size toothbrush with water or training toothpaste. You can also use a wet washcloth, or finger brush to wipe the teeth clean.
- A cavity in your mouth increases the risk of your baby to have cavities. The bacteria that cause dental decay are transmissible. Having dental decay is not 'genetic' but rather the bacteria is shared between mother and baby. Avoid sharing utensils and straws and cleaning pacifiers with your mouth. This will pass the bacteria from your mouth to your baby's mouth.
- Visit a pediatric dentist by age one and establish a dental home.