



appearance. Primary teeth also guide permanent teeth into place, aid in jaw and face formation and influence your child's overall health.

about teething

- Most babies get their first tooth between ages 6 and 14 months.
- On average, all 20 primary teeth will have erupted by about age 3.
- When teething, babies may become fussy, sleepless and irritable, lose their appetite or drool more.
- Teething infants may want to suck a finger, thumb or pacifier for comfort.
- When irritable from teething, let your infant chew on a clean cold washcloth, spoon or teething ring.
- Diarrhea, rashes and a fever are not normal symptoms for a teething baby. If your infant has these symptoms, it could be signs of another illness; consult with your child's physician.

You want to do all you can to ensure your baby's overall health, but have you thought about their dental health? Parents may think of a newborn baby as having no teeth, but the primary teeth that will erupt over the next few years are already present when your child is born. These teeth are crucial to your child's dental development and important to their total health. PARENTS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE by properly cleaning their child's teeth, helping prevent decay and creating good oral health care habits from an early age.

the importance of "baby" teeth

Primary or "baby" teeth serve your child the same way your teeth serve you: they enable proper chewing and correct speech development and affect facial

primary teeth eruption chart

UPPER TEETH	ERUPT	SHED
Central Incisor	8-12 mos.	6-7 yrs.
Lateral Incisor	9-13 mos.	7-8 yrs.
Canine (cuspid)	16-22 mos.	10-12 yrs.
First Molar	13-19 mos.	9-11 yrs.
Second Molar	25-33 mos.	10-12 yrs.
LOWER TEETH	ERUPT	SHED
Second Molar	23-31 mos.	10-12 yrs.
First Molar	14-18 mos.	9-11 yrs.
Canine (cuspid)	17-23 mos.	9-12 yrs.
Lateral Incisor	10-16 mos.	7-8 yrs.
Central Incisor	6-10 mos.	6-7 yrs.

what really matters:

PREVENTING EARLY CHILDHOOD CAVITIES

It's not the bottle, it's the beverage! As soon as baby teeth come in, decay can start to occur. The most common cause of tooth decay in children under age 3 is known as "baby bottle tooth decay." This decay can result from frequent exposure to sugary liquids in both bottles and sip cups.

Parents may think decay this early doesn't matter because "they're just baby teeth," however, decayed baby teeth can affect the developing permanent teeth yet to come in, as well as the child's eating, speech, and overall health and self esteem. Severely decayed teeth not only cause pain, but may result in expensive surgery to fix or remove the teeth. Infants with tooth decay will always be more cavity prone than infants with healthy teeth, so get started early to help ensure good oral health for your baby.

WHAT HAPPENS TO CAUSE DECAY?

- Milk, formula and juice all contain some kind of sugar, as do many snacks.
- Sugars from these beverages and snacks combine with the bacteria in the mouth to create a sticky film, known as plaque.
- If sugars aren't cleaned from the child's teeth, the plaque build-up can eat away at tooth surfaces, which can result in tooth decay.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO PREVENT DECAY?

- 1 Don't allow your infant or toddler to fall asleep with a bottle or sip cup filled with anything but water.
- 2 As long as your infant is taking the bottle or nursing, wipe the gums and teeth after each feeding. Progress to using a child toothbrush and brush at least twice daily, especially before bedtime.
- 3 Around age 1, wean your infant from the bottle and begin teaching drinking from a regular cup.
- 4 Try to make milk and juice available at meal and snack time only, so a child isn't "sipping" on these beverages throughout the day. Give your child water in between meals and snacks.
- 5 It's not just what children drink, but what they eat! Many popular snacks, such as fruit roll-ups and gummy fruits contain extra sugar and coat the teeth. Even dried fruits, with natural sugars, can get stuck in and between tooth surfaces, making teeth harder to clean.
- 6 What can you give your child as a alternative? Cheese, for example, is not only a healthy snack but has been shown to fight decay. Snacks like jello, pudding and yogurt may have just as much sugar as fruit rolls-ups, but they won't be stuck on the teeth for long periods of time because they wash away more easily.





caring for YOUR CHILD'S TEETH

during your pregnancy

- If you keep a healthy mouth, your baby is more likely to have healthy teeth and gums.
- Science shows that mothers with active decay problems, gum problems, or both will transmit the bad bacteria to the baby and make the baby more susceptible to decay and gum disease.
- During pregnancy, get your mouth in optimum health. Have decayed teeth repaired. Get treatment for gum disease.

birth to 6 months [before teeth erupt]

- Begin cleaning your baby's mouth during the first few days after birth.

- Wipe baby's gums with a clean, soft washcloth after each feeding. This removes sugary liquids and foods that can cause tooth decay and helps your infant get used to having the mouth cleaned and checked.

6 months to 1 year [as teeth erupt]

- As soon as baby teeth appear, begin brushing teeth gently with a child-size, soft toothbrush and water or training toothpaste. Wait to use fluoride toothpaste until the child can spit.
- Check child's teeth monthly for any changes or signs of decay.
- It is recommended a child receive a dental well baby check-up by their first birthday. If your dentist does not feel comfortable examining your child, ask for a referral to a pediatric dentist. A pediatrician may also be able to assess a child at high risk for dental decay and refer to a dentist.

1 to 3 years [as teeth erupt]

- Between the ages of 2 and 4, most children will have between 12–16 teeth. Although the child is gaining independence, parental assistance is needed to brush properly.
- Brush your child's teeth at least twice daily, especially before bedtime.
- In children over age 3, use no more than a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste (choose one with an American Dental Association seal).
- Start gentle flossing when two of your child's teeth begin to touch.
- Replace your child's toothbrush when the bristles are bent.
- Check your child's teeth monthly for changes.
- White spots or lines on the front or back side of teeth are indications of early cavities. See a dentist right away to prevent cavities from becoming worse.
- Schedule regular dental visits for your child.

thumb sucking & pacifiers

Sucking is a natural reflex and can comfort babies and toddlers. Most children will gradually stop a pacifier or thumb sucking habit between the ages of 2 and 4.

It's best if children stop sucking pacifiers by 18 months of age. Aggressive sucking after this age can cause problems with development of the mouth — permanently distorting the shape of the jaws and how teeth align.

Thumb and pacifier sucking can affect the teeth essentially the same way. However, a pacifier habit is often easier to break, because you can take it away. Stopping the thumb sucking habit will only be successful when the child is ready.

If you have concerns about thumb sucking or pacifier use, consult your dentist.



start right

PARENTS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

a practical guide to your
baby's dental health

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