

A lifetime of healthy smiles starts with BABY steps

Your guide to caring
for your baby's teeth



Why are baby teeth important?

Many people think baby teeth don't matter because they'll eventually fall out. But baby teeth are very important because they help your child chew food and talk clearly. They also save space for the permanent teeth.

Early childhood dental care is a good starting point for a lifetime of good dental health. Start now to give your baby a healthy smile for life.

Your oral health is also important

Make sure you have healthy teeth and gums before your baby is born and after your baby arrives. Parents and caregivers with active tooth decay (cavities) or gum disease can pass germs that cause these conditions on to their baby.

Oral health affects your child in many ways

Children with poor oral health can experience pain and infections, and other negative impacts to their overall health and development, including:

- lack of sleep
- poor nutrition
- difficulty learning
- problems communicating
- struggles in school
- lack self-esteem

Taking your baby to the dentist by his or her first birthday can help them feel more comfortable going to the dentist as they grow older. It also provides an opportunity to have the dentist talk to you about proper oral health care for your baby.

Healthy smiles start with these four steps:



BEGIN...

the habit of cleaning your baby's mouth even though they may not have teeth yet. Wipe baby's mouth and gums using a clean, warm cloth after each feeding and before bed.

AVOID...

allowing liquids to remain on your baby's teeth all night, as this is a common cause of early cavities. Never put your baby to bed with any liquid other than water.

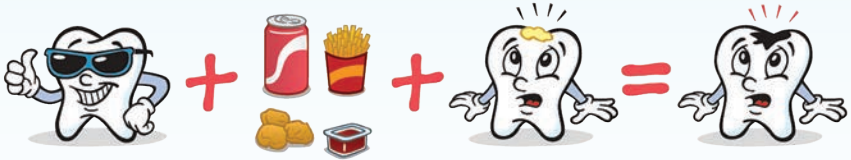
BRING...

your baby to the dentist for his or her first dental visit by age 1, or sooner if you notice something that concerns you. White spots along the gum line of the front teeth are the first sign of cavities.

YOU...

can give your baby a healthy smile. It all starts with caring for your baby's first teeth. Celebrate a lifetime of great dental health!

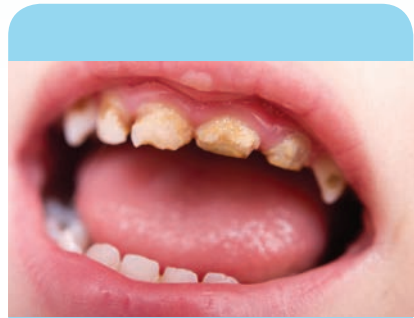
What causes cavities?



Tooth + Food + Plaque = Cavity

For a cavity to happen there must be a tooth, some food or drink, and plaque.

- Plaque is a soft, sticky layer of germs that forms on teeth every day.
- Plaque left on your baby's teeth can more easily lead to cavities.
- The germs in the plaque feed on sugars and create an acid. This acid is what starts cavities.
- Daily exposure to high-sugar foods and drinks (with natural and added sugars) can cause cavities.



Cavities are the *most common chronic infectious disease* of early childhood. Good oral health habits can help prevent them.

How to help your baby avoid cavities



Studies show that breastfed babies have fewer cavities, but even breastfed babies need their teeth cleaned. Here are a few helpful tips:

- Brush your baby's teeth every day.
- Use a toothpaste that contains fluoride and is recommended by the Canadian Dental Association - *First tooth until age three:* Brush with a grain-sized portion twice a day.
- Brush in a small circular motion over the teeth and gums.
- Your baby's teeth should be flossed every day.
- To prevent cavities, the most important time to brush is at bedtime.
- Professionally applied topical fluoride helps care for your child's teeth. Your dentist may suggest it for your child.
- Cavity-causing germs can spread when you share spoons or toothbrushes with your baby. If something has been in your mouth, it should not go into your baby's mouth.
- Check for early cavities. Once a month, lift your baby's upper lip and check the back and front of the teeth for white or brown spots.



Tips to help with teething



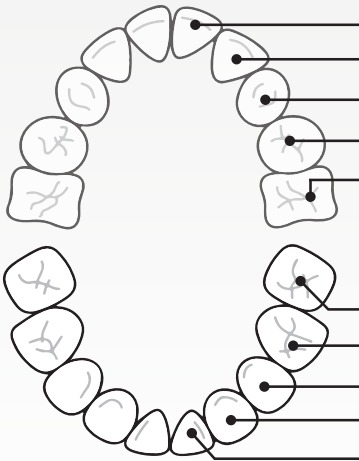
From the age of three months, signs of teething may include:

- Drooling more than usual, red cheeks, sore red gums, irritability, loss of appetite, rashes and a need to chew on things.
- NOTE: High fever is NOT a symptom of teething. *High fever usually indicates a need for medical attention.*

Caregivers can help by:

- Gently massaging gums with a clean finger or a dry toothbrush.
- Offer a clean damp cloth or a teething ring.
- Do not use teething gels or ointments or give teething biscuits, as they may contain sugar and may be a risk for choking.

Teething timetable



Upper baby teeth	Come in	Fall out
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	22-33 mos.	10-12 yrs.

Lower baby teeth	Come in	Fall out
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.



Better snacks for baby teeth



Healthy snacking plays an important role in oral health.

- Reduce the frequency and amount of sugar intake by selecting healthy, nutritious snacks such as fruit pieces, cheese, and chopped vegetables.
- It's important to supervise young children when they are eating. Be aware of food that could cause choking.
- Certain fruits and vegetables should be cut lengthwise or into pieces.
- The best snacks for oral health are nutritious foods that do not stick to your child's teeth and don't contain sugar.
- After children reach six months of age, it's best to serve them water to quench thirst between meals.

More tips for good oral health



Introducing your child to a cup

The Canadian Dental Association suggests you introduce drinking from a cup by age one.

- Limit frequent drinking and sipping of juice or other sweet drinks which can cause cavities
- Children should drink milk, water and a limited amount of fruit juice (with no sugar added and not more than 175 ml per day)



Pacifiers and thumb sucking

- Sucking is natural for babies, as it helps them relax
- Pacifiers are not recommended for breastfed babies
- Pacifiers can affect the position of your baby's teeth, so use of a pacifier should be stopped as soon as possible

IF you use a pacifier:

- Make sure it is the right size for your baby's mouth and that it meets safety standards
- Do not dip it in anything sweet such as honey or sugar as this could cause cavities
- Do not attach a string to it; use a proper clip

Dealing with dental injuries

It's normal for active, busy babies to experience bumps and bruises as they grow and develop.

Toothache

- If swelling occurs, place a cold compress on the face next to the sore tooth
- Never use heat as this can increase swelling and pain
- Never place an aspirin, other pain relievers or numbing gels on gum tissue around a sore tooth
- See a dentist immediately

Broken or bumped teeth

- Place a cold compress on the face next to the injured tooth
- Do not try to place a knocked-out baby tooth back in its socket
- See a dentist immediately

Bitten tongue or lip

- If swelling persists, apply a cold compress
- If bleeding persists or the bite is severe, take your child to a dentist or seek urgent care

Injury prevention

- Soon your baby will be busy walking and running... ensure that they do not have anything in their mouth
- Be safe - put corner guards on furniture and use safety gates to keep your child from injury

Resources for good oral health



About Kids Health Canada:
aboutkidshealth.ca

Canadian Dental
Association:
cda-adc.ca

Canadian Dental
Hygienists Association:
cdha.ca

Eating Well with
Canada's Food Guide:
healthcanada.gc.ca

EatRight Ontario:
ontario.ca/eatright

Health Canada:
Hc-sc.gc.ca

Healthy Ontario:
HealthyOntario.com

Ontario Association for
Public Health Dentistry:
oaphd.on.ca

U.S. Centres for Disease
Control and Prevention:
cdc.gov

Windsor-Essex County
Health Unit:
wechu.org/your-health/dental



Top tips for strong teeth and healthy gums

- 1 Baby teeth are important.
- 2 Mom's teeth are important.
- 3 Wipe baby's mouth and gums with a cloth after feeding and before bed.
- 4 Brush your child's teeth twice a day and floss once a day.
- 5 To prevent cavities use a fluoride toothpaste.
- 6 Give healthy snacks – avoid high sugar foods and drinks.
- 7 Cavity-causing germs can spread when you share spoons or toothbrushes.
- 8 Introduce drinking from a cup by age one.
- 9 Check for early cavities monthly. Lift your baby's upper lip and check the back and front of the teeth for white or brown spots.
- 10 Babies should visit the dentist by their first birthday.

This booklet is produced in association with:



For more information, contact the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 519-258-2146 ext. 1199 or at www.wechu.org

