

Early Dental Health: Early Childhood Tooth Decay



Seven Steps to Good Oral Health:

1. Do not let your child sip on sweet drinks throughout the day.
2. Give your child water to drink between meals.
3. If you put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill it only with water to prevent cavities.
4. Brush your baby's teeth twice a day using a smear of fluoride toothpaste on a soft-bristle baby toothbrush.
5. Use fluoride toothpaste to prevent cavities. For children under age 2, use a smear of toothpaste. For children between ages 2 and 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste.
6. Talk with your child's doctor or dentist about possible fluoride varnish treatments.
7. Take your baby to the dentist by age 1 to have his first dental check up.

Parents play the most important part in taking care of their child's teeth.

By making good choices for your baby, you can avoid problems like cavities, and early tooth loss.

Through simple steps you can do at home, you can prevent early childhood tooth decay and give your child the gift of a healthy smile and good oral health.

Mississippi State Department of Oral Health
http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/41,0,151.html



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What is early childhood tooth decay?

How do I prevent early childhood tooth decay?

When should I stop giving my baby a bottle?

When should I start brushing my child's teeth?

When should I start using fluoride toothpaste to brush my child's teeth?

Should my baby get fluoride varnish treatments?

Why are baby teeth important?

When should I take my baby for his first dental checkup?



**Step by Step to
Early Dental Health**

What is early childhood tooth decay?

Early childhood tooth decay is when baby (primary) teeth get cavities - germs are passed from mother's mouth to baby (or from another person's mouth close to the baby, like a brother or sister). This happens by sharing cups, forks and spoons, or an adult cleaning a pacifier with their own mouth. These germs use sugar from food and drinks in the baby's diet to make cavities. Early childhood tooth decay can happen as soon as the baby teeth come into the mouth, especially if the baby sleeps with a bottle of formula, juice, or milk. It is also harmful to teeth if a baby or toddler walks around drinking out of a bottle or sippy cup throughout the day. Snacking or grazing on sugary foods or drinks throughout the day is also harmful to teeth.



Early childhood tooth decay.

How do I prevent early childhood tooth decay?

Early childhood tooth decay can be prevented. It is important not to share cups, forks and spoons, or to clean your child's pacifier with your own mouth, which passes germs from your mouth to his. Instead of giving your child sugary drinks, like soda, or juice, to drink between meals, give him water. Teach him how to drink from a training cup, starting at 6 months old. At night, try giving your child a pacifier or a soft toy to sleep with instead of a bottle. If you must use a bottle to put your baby to bed, fill the bottle with water. Brush his teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

When should I stop giving my baby a bottle?

Stop giving a bottle between 12 and 15 months. Training cups can be used as a transition from the bottle to a cup starting when your child is 6 months old. Get a training cup without a valve that has a lid with a spout. To keep the spills down, find a cup that is self-righting.



When should I start brushing my child's teeth?

When the teeth begin to appear, start using a soft bristle baby toothbrush with a smear of fluoride toothpaste. Parents should brush baby's teeth twice a day to remove plaque (clear, sticky film on the teeth) that can cause tooth decay.

When should I start using fluoride toothpaste to brush my child's teeth?

Start using fluoride toothpaste when the first tooth appears. Fluoride protects the teeth from cavities. For children under the age of 2, only use a smear of fluoride toothpaste on the toothbrush. For children ages 2 to 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste.

Should my baby get fluoride varnish treatments?

Fluoride varnish helps to reduce tooth decay for the child at high risk for tooth decay. Not every child needs these treatments. When your child's first teeth come in, talk to your child's doctor or dentist to determine if he should receive fluoride varnish treatments.



Why are baby teeth important?

Parents play the most important part in taking care of a child's teeth. Baby teeth are a very important part of your child's development. Your child needs strong and healthy teeth so he can learn to speak clearly, chew food, save space for growing permanent teeth, and smile with confidence.

When should I take my baby for his first dental checkup?

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend a child have his first dental visit by his first birthday.

