

# Early Dental Health: Birth to Age Three



**Why are baby teeth important?**

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**When should I start brushing my child's teeth?**

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

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



**Step by Step to  
Early Dental Health**

## Five Steps to Good Oral Health:

1. Once the first tooth appears, brush the baby's teeth twice a day using a smear of fluoride toothpaste on a soft-bristle baby toothbrush.
2. Use fluoride toothpaste to prevent cavities. For children under age 2, use a smear of toothpaste. For children between the ages of 2 and 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste.
3. If you must put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill only with water to prevent cavities.
4. Talk with your child's doctor or dentist about possible fluoride varnish treatments.
5. Take your baby to the dentist by age 1 to have his first dental check up.

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



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## How can I help my baby during teething?

Give your child a frozen washcloth or cold teething toys to chew on to relieve the pain. Some parents have found rubbing the gums with a clean finger is soothing to the baby. Your child may experience drooling, crankiness, loss of appetite, and/or they may not sleep well. These responses are natural. Teething does not cause fever and diarrhea, so you should report these symptoms to your child's doctor. If anything seems unusual, call your child's doctor or dentist.

## 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.

## Why are baby teeth important?

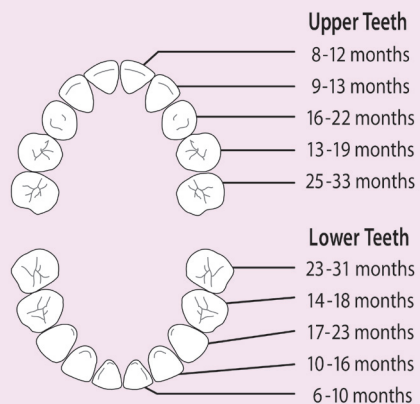
Parents play the most important part in taking care of a child's teeth. Baby teeth are a very important part of your child's development. Your child needs strong and healthy teeth so he can learn to speak clearly, chew food, save space for growing permanent teeth, and smile with confidence.



## When do the teeth start appearing in the mouth?

When your baby is about 6 months old, the front teeth will start to appear. By age 3 most children will have all 20 baby teeth.

The chart below shows the average age and order in which your baby's teeth will appear.

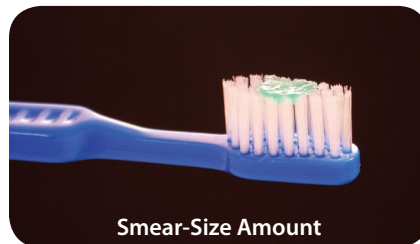


## When should I start brushing my child's teeth?

When the teeth start 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 from the ages of 2 to 6, use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.



## Should my baby get fluoride varnish treatments?

Fluoride varnish helps to reduce tooth decay for children 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.



## Should I put my baby to bed with a bottle?

No. Putting a baby to bed with a bottle filled with milk, juice or other sweet liquids can lead to tooth decay. If you must put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill the bottle with water. You may use a pacifier instead of a bottle.

## When should I stop giving my baby a bottle?

Start your baby using a cup when he or she is around 6 months old and stop giving a bottle between 12 and 15 months. Training cups can be used as a transition from the bottle to a cup. 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.

