

MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

WIC

Women, Infants & Children Program

# Healthy First Teeth



## **HEALTHY FIRST TEETH**

Healthy first teeth start with you! Tooth decay is caused by germs (bacteria) that can spread from your mouth to your baby's mouth.

Germs are spread when you share things that have been in your mouth, like food, cups, straws, pacifiers, or even by kissing.

You can help your child have healthy teeth by setting an example and brushing your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and by flossing daily.

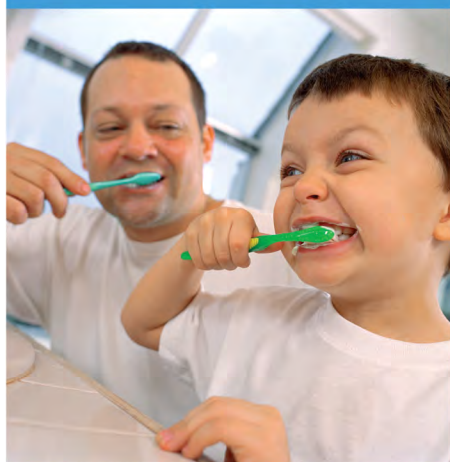
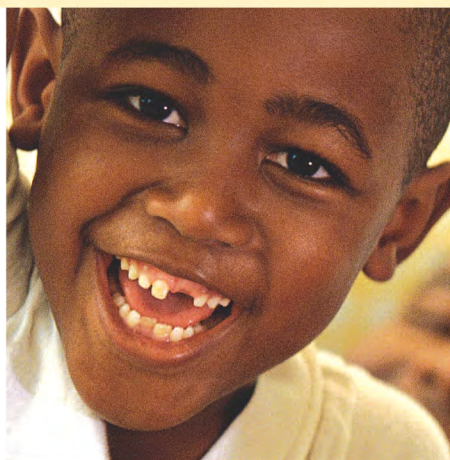
## **CHECK YOUR BABY'S TEETH.**

Healthy teeth should all be one color. If you see spots or stains, take your baby to the dentist.

## **CLEAN YOUR BABY'S TEETH.**

Clean your baby's teeth as soon as they come in. Use a clean, soft cloth or a baby's toothbrush. Clean the teeth at least once a day. It's best to clean them right before bedtime.

At about age 2, most of your child's teeth will be in. You can begin brushing his teeth with a small drop of toothpaste - less than the size of a pea. Do not use toothpaste if your child swallows it.



*Replace your child's toothbrush when it becomes frayed, or every three months, whichever is sooner.*

### **LET YOUR TODDLER CHOOSE HIS OWN TOOTHBRUSH.**

Let your toddler choose two or three colorful child-size tooth brushes. Be sure the bristles are soft. Each morning and evening, let him select the one he wants to use, so he will feel more in control. Rinse the toothbrush after every use, and keep it in a holder. Replace the brush after your child has been sick so that germs in the bristles won't cause reinfection.

### **LET THEM BRUSH THEIR OWN TEETH.**

When your child starts showing an interest in brushing, let him try and brush himself. Don't worry about how well he brushes - just let him get the job done. Praise his efforts.

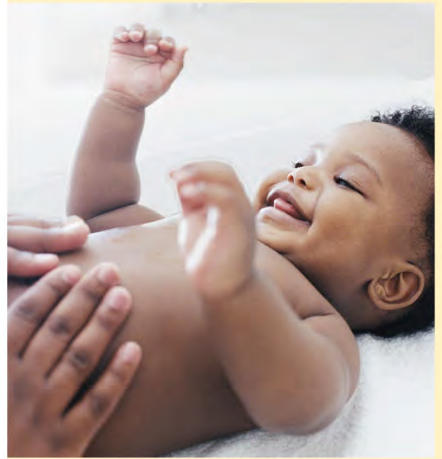
After you've praised him, get another toothbrush and approach him from behind, letting him hold the brush along with you, and give him a complete brushing.

While helping him, you can say something like, "These two teeth look clean, let's go on to the next ones!"



## PREVENT BABY BOTTLE TOOTH DECAY.

- Breast milk is less likely to cause tooth decay.
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle at night or at naptime. However, if you do put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill it only with water.
- Milk, formula, juices, and other drinks like soda or sweet tea all have sugar in them. Sucking on a bottle or sippy cup filled with these liquids can cause tooth decay. Decayed teeth can cause pain and cost a lot to repair. Not repairing cavities leaves a child at risk of serious infection and tooth loss. Early tooth loss can cause problems with permanent teeth.
- During the day, do not give your baby a bottle or cup filled with sweet drinks to use as a pacifier.
- If your baby uses a pacifier, do not dip it in anything sweet like sugar or honey.
- At around 6 to 8 months, offer juice in a cup, not a bottle, only at meal and snack times.
- Wean your baby from a bottle to a cup by 1 year of age.



## **FEED YOUR CHILD HEALTHY FOOD.**

Develop healthful eating habits from the start. Choose foods that do not have a lot of sugar in them. Give your child fruits and vegetables instead of candy and cookies. Iron-fortified cereal and pureed meats are excellent sources of iron.



## **PROTECT YOUR BABY'S TEETH WITH FLUORIDE.**

Fluoride protects teeth from tooth decay and helps heal early decay. Fluoride is in the tap water of many towns and cities. Ask your doctor, dentist, or clinic if your water has fluoride in it. If it doesn't, ask about fluoride products that are best for you and your child.



## **TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE DENTIST.**

Take your child to the dentist by 1 year of age. At this first visit, your dentist can check your child's teeth and discuss ways to prevent tooth decay. You should visit the dentist once a year. Have the dentist explain the importance of brushing. Remind your child that the dentist said, "We have to brush your teeth so they will stay healthy."



For more information,  
stop by your local health department, or  
call the Mississippi State Department of Health  
WIC Office at **1-800-545-6747**



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**www.HealthyMS.com**

**1-866-HLTHY4U**

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