

# Early Dental Health: Brushing Baby's Teeth



## Four Steps to Good Oral Health:

1. 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. Limit food and drinks high in sugar, including juice.
4. Take your baby to the dentist by age 1 to have his first dental checkup.

Parents are the first line of defense against cavities in their children. By following simple steps when brushing your child's teeth, you are giving your baby the best chance of having a healthy smile and good oral health. You are preparing your child for a lifetime of good oral health. Baby teeth are a very important part of your child's development. Your child needs his teeth to be strong and healthy so he can learn to speak clearly, chew food, save space for growing permanent teeth, and have a pretty smile and confidence.

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

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

*How do I brush my baby's teeth?*

*How does sugar cause a cavity to form?*

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



**Step by Step to  
Early Dental Health**

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

When the teeth start to appear, use 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. As your child gets older, teach him to spit out remaining toothpaste. Around the age of 6 or 7, most children are able to brush their teeth on their own. Parents should continue to monitor and make sure their child is brushing his teeth.

## How do I brush my baby's teeth?

Find a comfortable position and try to make brushing a pleasant experience. Make it a game, or brush your own teeth while they watch and then gently begin brushing your child's teeth with their own brush. Do not share your brush because this can also share germs from your mouth.

It is often easier to brush small baby's teeth when your child is lying down. You will be able to see better, and do a better job. Place the baby on a bed or chair with their head on your lap, or sitting on your lap with their head resting on your chest. As they grow, stand behind older children and tilt their head upward so you can see their teeth. Be sure to brush the backsides of the teeth, and where the teeth and gums meet. Call your dentist if you notice any unusual white or brown spots on their teeth.



## How does sugar cause a cavity to form?

It is natural to have bacteria live in the mouth. The bacteria will attach to plaque. Plaque is a sticky, clear film that builds up on the teeth. When plaque is exposed to food and drinks high in sugar, it forms acid. If the acid stays on teeth for 20 to 40 minutes, it can cause cavities. To prevent early childhood cavities limit sugar and brush your child's teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

**PLAQUE GERMS FEEDING  
ON SUGAR MAKE ACID**

**PLAQUE + SUGAR = ACID  
ACID + TOOTH = DECAY**



Early Childhood Tooth Decay

## When should I take my baby for their 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.