

Protecting Tiny Teeth

Your baby will get 20 baby teeth. Baby teeth save the space for grown-up teeth. Keep them healthy!

- ◆ Breastfeeding is the safest way to feed your baby and easiest way to comfort your baby.
- ◆ Never put juice, soda, or any sweetened drinks in your baby's bottle.
- ◆ Give water between meals.
- ◆ Hold your baby if you are going to bottlefeed. Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle.
- ◆ Offer water from a cup at about 6 months of age. Babies should be off the bottle by the age of 12 to 14 months.
- ◆ Avoid foods high in sugar and foods that stick to the teeth such as gum drops, jelly beans, or raisins. These foods can also cause choking in young children.
- ◆ Never dip a pacifier in honey, sugar, or syrup.
- ◆ Fruit juice is not recommended for babies under 12 months of age.
- ◆ At 1 year of age, give your child no more than 4 oz of 100% fruit juice per day.

Do not pass tooth decay germs to your baby—never put anything in your baby's mouth that has been in your mouth.

- ◆ Never share feeding spoons, forks, cups, or straws.
- ◆ Never chew your baby's food.
- ◆ Never clean a pacifier or baby toy with your saliva.

Clean your baby's teeth.

- ◆ Clean your baby's gums and teeth every day. Use a clean washcloth or a fresh gauze square.
- ◆ When the first tooth appears, gently brush twice a day with a small, soft toothbrush that has a "smear" of fluoride toothpaste.
- ◆ When your child is 2 years of age and older, add a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste to the toothbrush. Do not let children swallow the toothpaste.
- ◆ Begin flossing your child's teeth once a day when the teeth are touching and you are unable to brush around the entire tooth.

Take care of your own teeth. Tooth decay germs can be passed from parent or caregiver to baby.

- ◆ Visit your dentist for regular dental checkups and cleanings.
- ◆ Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- ◆ Floss your teeth at least once a day.
- ◆ Replace your toothbrush when frayed or after a respiratory illness.
- ◆ Don't smoke and don't use smokeless tobacco.



Did you know?

GERMS + SUGAR = TOOTH DECAY

Germs and sugary drinks and food in the mouth can cause tooth decay.



This is an example of tooth decay in a young child (early childhood caries). It was caused by letting the infant or child use a bottle or cup as a pacifier. The bottle or cup was filled with formula, milk, juice, or a sweet drink.

Tooth decay or cavities in baby teeth:

- ◆ can cause painful toothaches.
- ◆ can cause the child to eat less and wake up more at night.
- ◆ need to be treated by a dentist. Badly damaged teeth may need to be removed.

Take your child for regular dental checkups.

- ◆ Children should see a dentist at the age of 1 year for a checkup. If you see "white spots" on your baby's teeth, go sooner.
- ◆ Check with your doctor or dentist to make sure your child is receiving the right amount of fluoride.