



Baby Teeth are Important

Dental health for children from birth to 5 years old

Plaque grows in the baby's mouth even before the first tooth erupts and it is important to start good hygiene habits early. Baby teeth are important for eating, talking, smiling, and holding a place for adult teeth.

Help your child learn good dental habits

- Wipe your baby's gums morning and night (or more) with a clean washcloth
- If baby falls asleep while feeding, gently remove the nipple before placing baby to sleep in the crib on its back
- If your baby sleeps with a bottle, only use water
- As soon as your baby's teeth appear, brush them at least twice a day with a small, soft toothbrush with tap water only (no toothpaste)
- Continue to help your child brush until the age of 8
- Once a month, lift your baby's top lip to check for cavities. Look at the front and back of the top four teeth, especially around the gum line. If you see white or brown spots, take your baby to the dentist



- Give your baby water to drink in a plastic cup when he or she can sit up alone
- If your baby uses a bottle, wean by 9 to 12 months
- A sippy cup should only be used for water
- If your baby uses a soother, do not put it in your mouth; this will pass bacteria that cause cavities
- Never dip a soother in syrup, honey, or other sweeteners before giving it to your baby. This can cause cavities

- Your baby's first visit to the dentist should occur at the **age of one year**, or **when the first teeth appear**
- Begin flossing once a day when your child has teeth that are touching
- At **3 years of age**, start using fluoride toothpaste. Use a small, soft toothbrush with a very small amount of toothpaste to brush your child's teeth. Make sure your child does not swallow the toothpaste



Help your child learn good eating habits

- Give your child healthy foods and snacks like fruits, vegetables, cheese and white milk
- Offer your child tap water for thirst between meals
- Limit juice to special occasions and only serve it at mealtime. Even natural sugar causes cavities
- Limit sweets and drinks to special occasions, and brush your child's teeth after eating sugary or sticky foods

Need more information?

Talk to your dentist or dental hygienist or call
Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744