

Your Baby's Oral Health

It's never too early to start taking care of your little one's teeth. In fact, proper oral health care should start well before your baby's first teeth even erupt. For a lifetime of healthy smiles, follow these guidelines to ensure your child gets off on the right tooth.

Just say "no" to bottles in bed.

Never put your baby to sleep with a bottle or sippy cup filled with milk, formula, fruit juice, or other sweet liquid. The sugar in these beverages can cause cavities in your baby's teeth, leading to "baby bottle tooth decay." Instead, let your child finish his or her bottle before bedtime. If you must give your baby a bottle when he or she is going to sleep, fill the bottle with water instead.

Be sure your baby drinks fluoridated water.

By the time your baby is 6 months old, he or she will require some fluoride for healthy teeth. Most babies can get all of the fluoride they need from the water they drink. Keep in mind that bottled water usually doesn't have any fluoride, however. If you have questions about fluoride, talk to your pediatrician or dentist.

Clean your baby's gums.

Twice a day, gently wipe your baby's gums with a wet, clean, soft cloth. You should start doing this before your baby's teeth even come in, or "erupt." When can you expect to see that first tooth? The average age is 6 months, but some infants don't get their first tooth until they are 14 or 15 months old. Some babies see their first tooth when they are as young as 3 months old!

Brush new teeth.

Once the first teeth come in, you can clean them using a soft, flexible children's toothbrush and water. Continue to clean your baby's entire mouth, not just the new teeth. Gently brush his or her first teeth with a tiny amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Switch to a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste once your child is age 2.



See a dentist.

Whether it's the first tooth or the first birthday—no matter which happens first—it's time for your child's first dentist appointment! Your dentist will examine your child's mouth and advise you on any concerns you have, such as thumbsucking. If you are having trouble brushing your child's teeth, your dentist can show you a few methods to ensure you are doing a thorough job. Regular exams are essential to your child's oral health so be sure to keep regular appointments with your child's dentist.



The AGD is a member of the Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition comprised of 35 leading dental health organizations. Look for more information about the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign at www.2min2x.org.

www.KnowYourTeeth.com

Brought to you by the AGD, this website answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and can help visitors find highly-qualified general dentists near where they live.

Want more fact sheets? Go to www.agd.org/practicemanagement/factsheet.

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