



## Your Child's Teeth: Making That Smile Spectacular

Cavities are the most common disease in children. More than 40% have tooth decay by age 5. Tooth decay can cause pain, and affect your child's growth. But you can prevent cavities!

**Birth-1 year:** It is a good idea for the whole family to take very good care of their teeth during this time. Amazingly, if parents brush, floss, and use a dental rinse, they can change the type of bacteria in their own mouths from bad to good. Inevitably, these same bacteria get transferred from parents to baby, and help prevent cavities. Still, to limit the transfer of bacteria from you mouth to your baby's, it is best not to suck on the pacifier to clean it.

As at any age, it is important to avoid sugar. This includes juice. Babies do not need juice, but if you do give it, be sure to dilute it with water and give no more than 1 cup per day. Avoid honey in the first year, and do not add sugary flavorings to baby's milk (like chocolate or strawberry powders). You could add fresh fruit to milk for a special treat.

Some other tips: give 1 cup of fluoridated water per day when the first teeth erupt. Most of the tap water around here contains fluoride (except for Livermore and Tracy), and Brita-type filters will not remove the fluoride. But if you live in an area without fluoridated tap water, or if you choose to use bottled water that does not contain fluoride, we can give you a prescription for a fluoride supplement. Don't let babies sleep with the bottle in the mouth. Brush daily (after milk/before bed) when the first teeth appear using a soft cloth or toothbrush. You can use water or a children's toothpaste *without* fluoride (swallowing too much fluoride is bad for the teeth). Once the teeth are brushed, avoid milk and juice until morning (if possible!).

**1-2 years:** Dentists recommend brushing twice a day. It helps to try to make this a fun time, singing, being funny, etc. Or, you can try to take turns brushing your own teeth and then the baby's. Consider a first dental check this year.

**2 years and up:** Dentists recommend brushing twice a day. Start using fluoride toothpaste as soon as they can spit it out (but just a small, pea-sized amount). Begin flossing when the teeth are touching. Schedule a dental visit every 6 months. Medical and Healthy families can call 1-800-322-6384 to find a dentist. If you have another insurance type, feel free to ask us for recommendations.

**Teething:** Most babies do well with teething, but symptoms may include: biting, drooling, sucking, loose stools, gum rubbing, facial rash, mild decrease in appetite, fussiness, ear rubbing, and mild fever (99-100). Sometimes teething causes a baby who was sleeping through the night to start waking up. Cold wet towels, or teething rings will help. Try rubbing the gums with your finger for a minute or so. Most babies will require little or no medication, but if you are having a bad night you may try acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Motrin, or Advil), or a small amount of teething gel (like Oragel). Avoid frozen items that may burn the lips. Call if the symptoms are more severe or not improving.

**When will those teeth come in?** Genetics play a big role. The diagram below provides only a rough guide. We have seen many babies with no teeth until after the first birthday, and some lucky babies get the canines (I-teeth, or vampire teeth) first!

Primary Teeth		Upper Teeth	Erupt	Shed
	Central incisor		8-12 mos.	6-7 yrs.
	Lateral incisor		9-13 mos.	7-8 yrs.
	Canine (cuspid)		16-22 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	First molar		13-19 mos.	9-11 yrs.
	Second molar		25-33 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	Second molar		23-31 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	First molar		14-18 mos.	9-11 yrs.
	Canine (cuspid)		17-23 mos.	9-12 yrs.
	Lateral incisor		10-16 mos.	7-8 yrs.
	Central incisor		6-10 mos.	6-7 yrs.