

# FIRST BITES

## Information for Parents with Infants

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### BABY TEETH ARE IMPORTANT!

Commonly parents ask, Why should we worry about cavities in baby teeth when these teeth will be replaced by permanent teeth later?

The answer is that baby teeth serve important functions. Neglect of baby teeth can cause severe problems. Consequently, it is important to make sure that even these "temporary" baby teeth remain healthy and cavity free. Healthy baby teeth are crucial in helping the baby learn how to speak properly.

Healthy and nice looking teeth are important in building self-confidence and self-esteem. This is especially important at such an early age. Unfortunately, small children can be cruel to one another quick to tease peers about ugly looking or decayed teeth. Furthermore, bad breath resulting from poor dental hygiene can make your child an outcast among peers.

Baby teeth serve as spacers which maintain the proper spacing and alignment of the teeth so that permanent teeth have enough room to come in.

Baby teeth are important in proper feeding and nutrition. A recent study has illustrated a potential link between the number of cavities a child has and the probability of the child being underweight.

### BIRTH TO SIX MONTHS

- Clean mouth with gauze after feedings and at bedtime.
- Ask us about fluoride supplements.
- Develop the proper feeding habits to prevent "Nursing or Baby Bottle Caries"
- if you notice your child beginning to suck their fingers or thumbs, during the first 3 months of life, you can introduce your child to a pacifier. When not eating, the pacifier is better to use for soothing than a finger/thumb or a toy.

### Baby Bottle Caries

"Baby bottle caries" (or "nursing bottle caries") refers to a pattern of tooth decay which occurs in the teeth of infants and preschoolers who are allowed to nurse from a bottle containing a sugary beverage either frequently or for prolonged periods of time (such as while napping or sleeping at night). Baby bottle caries is also observed in those infants who are breast fed frequently throughout the night. Baby Bottle Decay can be completely



Effects of Baby Bottle Caries

avoidable

- Never allow your child to nurse for prolonged periods or fall asleep with a bottle containing a beverage, which contains sugars. This includes Fruit juices, Breast milk, milk and formula.
- if you must give them a bedtime bottle use only water inside the bottle.
- After every bottle feeding you take a wet cloth or gauze pad and gently wipe your child's gums and teeth. This will remove any bacteria containing plaque and excess sugar that may have built up.
- Never give your baby a pacifier dipped in any type of substance containing large amounts of sugar.

### Pacifiers

Pacifiers are less likely to cause a malocclusion and are usually discontinued at an earlier age than is thumbsucking. It is easier to take away a pacifier than a finger or thumb. Thumbsuckers typically continue the habit until 3-5 years.

- To avoid any trauma to the gums, it's important to buy a pacifier with a nipple made of rubber
- do not use the soother around the clock, only when necessary
- in rare instances, pacifiers may cause complications, like abnormal swallowing patterns
- check the pacifier daily for breakage. They do not last forever. The child could suck a "ripped" pacifier and choke on it
- do not hang the pacifier around your baby's neck with a string. Your baby could be accidentally strangled
- to avoid improper breathing and abnormal molding of the baby's jaws, choose a soother that resembles the natural nipple and breast
- Pacifier use can cause abnormal develop-

ment of the jaws and teeth.

Some reasons are:  
improperly sized and shaped soother  
strength of sucking action  
length of time the soother is present within the mouth

Most children should grow out of thumb-sucking and pacifier use by age 3 or 4. As long as the habit is discontinued before their permanent teeth come in (around ages 4-5) your child will be fine. If, however, they continue this habit as their permanent teeth come in it is best to help your child discontinue their habit.

The most effective way to accomplish this is to simply explain to your child that they must do so in order for their teeth to come in straight. You would be surprised at how effective simply explaining this to your child can be. When they do suck their thumb or use a pacifier give them a gentle verbal reminder.

Under no circumstances should you give negative reinforcement or punish a child for this behavior as this often causes the child to further embrace the habit. Many professionals urge parents to tape their children's fingers or apply bitter tasting solutions to the fingers to prevent thumbsucking. We would advise against this. It is somewhat cruel and is not as effective as providing positive reinforcement. What should you do if your child is having trouble giving up the pacifier or thumbsucking? We suggest gradually weaning your child. First start by not allowing them to suck their thumb or use a pacifier during certain hours of the day.

Offer them rewards when they successfully do this. Also, since thumbsucking and pacifier use are often security mechanisms, consider giving them a teddy bear, a blanket, or lots of hugs to, in effect, replace the pacifier or thumbsucking.

Gradually increase the number of hours in which they are not allowed to use the pacifier or suck their thumb until they no longer need these habits. Remember, the time they need the pacifier the most (during bed) should be the last time period phased out.

### SIX MONTHS TO ONE YEAR

- First tooth should appear; if you have any concerns call us to schedule an exam.

## Teething Chart

|                   | When Teeth Come In | When Teeth Fall Out |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Top Teeth         |                    |                     |
| central incisors  | 7-12 mos.          | 6-8 yrs.            |
| lateral incisors  | 9-13 mos.          | 7-8 yrs.            |
| canines (cuspids) | 16-22 mos.         | 10-12 yrs.          |
| first molars      | 13-19 mos.         | 9-11 yrs.           |
| second molars     | 25-33 mos.         | 10-12 yrs.          |
| Bottom Teeth      |                    |                     |
| second molars     | 20-31 mos.         | 10-12 yrs.          |
| first molars      | 12-18 mos.         | 9-11 yrs.           |
| canines (cuspids) | 16-23 mos.         | 9-12 yrs.           |
| lateral incisors  | 7-16 mos.          | 7-8 yrs.            |
| central incisors  | 6-10 mos.          | 6-8 yrs.            |

- Start brushing your child's teeth with water as soon as the first tooth appears. Brush teeth after each feeding and at bedtime with small, soft-bristled brush.
- Encourage children to drink from a cup. Wean them from breast or bottle by their first birthday.
- Baby begins to walk; be alert to dental injuries.
- If you think your child has dental problems, take the child to the dentist as soon as possible

### Teething

Babies are as individual in their teething as they are in everything else. Some babies drool for weeks before their first tooth comes in. For others, teeth seem to "pop" in without much fuss. Many babies have sore or tender gums that make them irritable. To soothe tender gums, gently rub them with a clean finger or the back of a small, cool spoon. A clean, cold teething ring may also be soothing. If your baby is still uncomfortable, we may recommend a medicine (acetaminophen) to reduce the discomfort. Teething biscuits may contain sugar so should not be offered. Parents sometimes worry about whether their child's teething is too early or too late. There is absolutely no correlation between when a child's teeth come in and how strong those teeth will be.

Teething can make babies cranky but it does not make them sick or cause fever. Teething and fevers can occur together because the infant is losing an inborn immunity to diseases at about the same time as teething starts. Do not ignore a fever because your baby is teething. Contact your physician.

### Brushing

When teeth appear, use a cotton swab daily to gently wipe the teeth and remove plaque. If your child has not grown up tolerating you "meddling in their mouth" you may have a

much tougher problem. If your child is two years of age and their teeth have not been brushed and inspected by you, in all probability, plaque has not been sufficiently removed.

### Brushing

The key to getting your child to brush is to make it fun. Start your program today and look for fun ways to engage your children in the activity. Make it seem as if brushing is a fun thing to do rather than a chore which must be done. One method that is fun and effective is allowing your children to brush your teeth. You should laugh a lot and make it a fun activity. Then allow them to "brush" their own teeth. Finish by brushing your child's teeth. You may want to include older siblings in the activity. Alternatively, have your child brush their favorite doll's teeth before you brush theirs. Remember always allow them to "brush" their own teeth and then follow up by brushing their teeth correctly.

Your enthusiasm is contagious! If you are enthusiastic about the activity, your children will be enthusiastic. Children are great emulators. They tend to want to do the things that their parents do. If your children see you brushing your teeth and displaying good dental habits, they will follow.

Start using pea-sized portions of fluoridated toothpaste when child is able to rinse. Amounts larger than a pea-size tend to create excessive foam making it more difficult for your child to brush. Make sure that your child gets in the habit of spitting out the toothpaste. Swallowing toothpaste on a consistent basis can lead to a condition known as fluorosis, in which spots may appear on your child's teeth.

Use a children's toothpaste. Adult toothpastes contain harsh flavorings can sting young mouths. This is one of the reasons children do not like to brush.

- Start flossing when two of the child's teeth begin to touch.
- Most primary teeth have erupted.
- Start dental visits by the child's second birthday or the eruption of the back teeth. Make visits regularly..

### Your Child's First Visit



The first visit sets the stage for a life of good dental health. Therefore, it is important that it be a positive experience for your child. If the first visit, which we sometimes called a "tickle visit", is not an emergency we will do the following:

- Show your child the office, and introduce him to some of our equipment and instruments such as the dental chair, the light, the mirror and the explorer (dental pick)
- Examine their Mouth, Teeth and Gums
- Evaluate adverse habits like: Thumb sucking or finger sucking
- Identify the child's fluoride needs
- Teach the parent how to effectively clean the child's teeth and gums
- Suggest a schedule of dental visits for your child, as each child has different needs

**It's also important for parents to make dental visits enjoyable for their children. You can help your child feel comfortable in several ways:**

- Don't let anyone tell your child scary stories about dental visits or let the child know you feel any anxiety about going to the dentist.
- Try not to let them overhear your stories of dental horror or the stories of others before their all-important early visits.
- Take your child with you or an older sibling for the first time. Let them play while you or the sibling are having your cleaning.
- Read your child some books about visiting the dentist. This will ease their fears and tell them exactly what to expect. Children need to be told what to expect and truthfully. There are many excellent books. The one I recommend the most however is **The Berenstain Bears Visit the Dentist**, by Stan and Jan Berenstain.

## ONE YEAR TO TWO YEARS