



## Keep Your Child's Mouth Healthy

**Children need strong, healthy teeth to chew their food, learn to speak and have a good looking smile. Baby teeth also keep space in the jaw for adult teeth. Start taking care of your child's teeth as soon as they come in. Then help them practice good habits to keep their mouths healthy.**

### Teething

When teeth come through the gums, it can make your baby fussy. Ease any pain by:

- Rubbing the gums gently with your clean finger.
- Letting your child chew on a teething ring or cold, wet washcloth. Never tie a teething ring around a baby's neck.

### See The Dentist

The best time to start taking your child to the dentist is at 12 months of age.



### Clean Your Baby's Teeth and Gums

- Wipe your baby's gums with a clean cloth before your baby has teeth. Then clean your baby's teeth as soon as they come in.
- Clean the teeth one or two times every day. Use a soft cloth or baby's toothbrush.
- Use a small (pea-size) amount of fluoride toothpaste as soon as your child can spit after brushing. Fluoride helps make teeth strong and prevents tooth decay. But swallowing too much can be bad for your child.
- Help them brush until they are 7 or 8 years old. Try brushing their teeth first and then letting them practice.

### Prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

- Tooth decay can be caused by sucking all day long on a bottle filled with liquids other than water. Decayed teeth can cause pain and can cost a lot to fix.
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle at night or at nap time.
- Do not let your child walk around with a bottle or drink from it for long periods.
- If your baby uses a pacifier, do not dip it in anything sweet like sugar or honey.
- Teach your child to drink from a cup around age one.

### Feed Your Child Healthy Foods and Drinks

Choose foods and drinks that do not have a lot of sugar in them. Drink water instead of soda or juice when thirsty. Give your child fruits and vegetables instead of candies and cookies. Foods with calcium, like milk, yogurt and cheese, will give your child strong teeth and bones.

**If you have any questions, be sure to ask your dentist.**