

# Baby teeth are important too!



Healthy teeth and gums are important for your child's health and well-being. Establish healthy habits early to set your child up for a lifetime of good dental health.

- **Caring for the mouth starts early.** Begin by cleaning your baby's mouth using a wet cloth and gently wiping the gums to remove any leftover milk or formula from the mouth.
- **Brush your child's teeth as soon as the first tooth appears** and make sure you lift the lip to brush along the gum line. Young children cannot clean their own teeth. Brush *for them* when they are very young and *with them* as they grow older.
- **Use a soft toothbrush.** Choose an appropriate size for the age of the child.
- **Use a small amount of fluoride toothpaste to protect the teeth from cavities.** Children under the age of 3 should only use a smear (size of a grain of rice) while those over 3 can use a pea-sized amount. Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste.
- **Make brushing fun and develop a routine:** brush at a specific time (after a bath or before a book); in a specific location (mom's knee); or with specific cues (music, counting).
- **Cavity-causing bacteria can transfer from your mouth to your child's.** Avoid sharing soothers, toothbrushes or other items with your child.
- **Regardless of age, discourage grazing on sugary foods and drinks throughout the day or overnight.** For instance, constant and slow sipping on milk-filled bottles or sippy cups with juice, keeps sugars in the mouth and can lead to cavities—fill them with water instead.
- **Choose healthy snacks** such as cheese, fruit or nuts. What's good for the body is good for the mouth.
- **The earlier a dental problem is found, the easier it is to fix.** Check your child's mouth and visit the dentist regularly.
- **Look in your child's mouth for signs of disease such as brown or yellow spots on the teeth.** Other signs that your child may be suffering from dental disease include: trouble sleeping; difficulty concentrating; and, avoiding certain foods, such as cold drinks and foods.
- **The first dental visit should take place by age one or within six months of when you see the first tooth.** Through regular examinations your dentist will monitor the development of your child's teeth and gums to catch problems early and prevent disease. Starting dental visits early can also improve your child's comfort with visiting the dentist.



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**Dental disease is largely preventable.**  
For more ways to help your child benefit from good dental health, talk to your dentist or visit [yourdentalhealth.ca](http://yourdentalhealth.ca).