

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BABY'S TEETH

The best way to make sure your baby has a healthy mouth – and body – is to practice good oral cleaning, eating and drinking habits at home. Here are a few tips for ensuring that your child has healthy teeth for a lifetime:



START EARLY!

- Beginning at birth, wipe your child's gums with a soft washcloth or piece of gauze after feeding.
- As soon as you see the first tooth (usually around 6 months), start brushing your baby's teeth twice a day with a soft toothbrush and a rice-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Place your baby's head in your lap to make brushing easier.

CHOOSE HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINKS

- If you give your baby a bottle at bedtime or naps, fill it with water. Juice, formula, milk and breast milk can cause decay if left in your baby's mouth.
- When your child is ready, provide healthy snacks like cheese, fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid cavity-causing soda and candy and limit carbohydrate snacks such as crackers and pretzels.
- Offer water instead of juice. Constantly sipping sweet drinks during the day or snacking on sticky foods can cause tooth decay.

“LIFT THE LIP” AND LOOK!

- Every month, lift your child's lip and look for changes on his or her teeth. Tooth decay often starts on the front or back of the front teeth and along the gums.
- If you notice white or brown spots on the teeth or anything unusual, contact your child's physician or dentist.

CHECK-UPS

- Have your baby's mouth checked by a dentist or physician by age one – or even sooner if you notice a problem.
- During the checkup, your dentist or physician should look for signs of early tooth decay, talk about daily tooth care including brushing, and discuss your baby's diet and eating habits.
- Ask whether your child needs a fluoride varnish or fluoride supplements (if your water does not contain fluoride).

TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN ORAL HEALTH!

If your mouth is healthy, your baby is more likely to have a healthy mouth too. Visit <https://www.themightymouth.org/> for more tips.