

SAFE Kids **HEALTHY** Kids
HAPPY Kids

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Parent Help Line



Help Keep Your Baby's and Child's Teeth Healthy



Parents are encouraged to help their kids have healthy teeth. Sometimes children's teeth are injured. However, the biggest problem is tooth decay. Tooth decay is found as early as age 3. Parents need to know the best way to prevent cavities and care for their children's teeth.

Plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that forms on teeth. When we eat and drink sugar and starch, the bacteria can produce acids that attack tooth enamel. Bacteria can cause tooth decay.

Even babies can have problems with tooth decay if parents do not practice good feeding habits. Healthy habits help prevent tooth decay.

- Run a damp washcloth over your baby's gums after each feeding.
- Once your child has a few teeth showing, brush them with a *soft* toothbrush or rub them with some gauze at the end of the day.
- **Never** put your baby to sleep with a bottle in his mouth.
- Do not allow a child to suck on a bottle all day. Use the bottle only for feeding.
- Limit snack foods and high sugar foods like candy and dried fruit.
- Talk to your child's doctor to see if your local water supply contains fluoride. If

not, it may be necessary to take fluoride supplements.

- Take your child to see a dentist by her first birthday. This is recommended by the American Dental Association.
- Begin to use small amounts of toothpaste (pea-sized) on a toothbrush when your child is 2–3 years of age. Make sure the child *spits out the toothpaste*. The fluoride in toothpaste can be absorbed by the body if it is swallowed. Too much fluoride can discolor the child's teeth.
- Start flossing your child's teeth when he has 2 teeth that touch.
- When your child starts to eat baby food and "grown-up food," make sure it is healthy. Children need to eat a balanced diet *every day* for healthy teeth.
- Follow the dentist's recommendations. He may recommend fluoride treatments or dental sealants.

Dentists can only do so much at the office. Parents must work with children to teach good oral health habits. Do your part. Help your children learn to take good care of their teeth.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.
544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.