

A Healthy Mouth for Your Baby

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health



*"The Grandfathers
and the Grandmothers
are in the children;
teach them well."
- Ojibwe*

Healthy teeth are important—even baby teeth.

Children need healthy teeth to help them chew, talk, and smile. And baby teeth hold space for adult teeth to come in. This fact sheet can help you keep your baby's mouth healthy!

5 Tips to Keep Your Baby's Mouth Healthy

1. Check and clean your baby's teeth
2. Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle
3. Feed your baby healthy food
4. Take your child to the dentist
5. Keep your family's teeth healthy

1 | Check and clean your baby's teeth

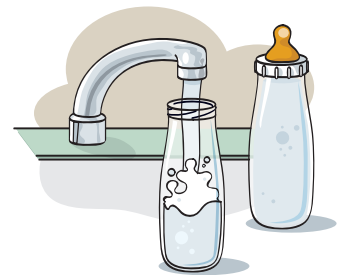
Once your baby's first tooth appears, clean their teeth with a soft washcloth or a brush after feeding. Use a small amount of fluoridated toothpaste, no bigger than a grain of rice, which helps in preventing cavities.



2 | Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle

Tooth decay can be painful for your baby. It is caused by sugar from food and drinks staying on their teeth too long. Milk, formula, juice, and soda all have sugar in them.

- If your baby likes to carry around a sippy cup, fill it with water, not other drinks that have sugar in them.
- Avoid putting your baby to bed with a bottle, especially with sugary drinks.
- At about age 1, teach your child to drink from an open cup.
- If your baby uses a pacifier, don't dip it in anything sweet like sugar or honey.



3 | Feed your baby healthy food

- Refined or processed sugars can promote tooth decay, choose foods and drinks without any added sugar.
- Avoid snack foods like muffins, cookies, and flavored yogurts.
- Give your child fruits and vegetables for snacks.



4 | Take your child to the dentist

Your child should see the dentist by age 1. At this visit, the dentist will:

- Check your child's teeth.
- Show you the best way to clean your child's teeth.
- Talk to you about other things such as a healthy diet and fluoride that can keep your child's mouth healthy.



5 | Keep your family's teeth healthy

- Brush and floss daily.
- Have regular dental visits for every member of the family.
- Eat balanced and nutritious foods and limit sugary drinks and snacks.
- Avoid using any form of tobacco.



National Institute of Dental
and Craniofacial Research

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research
1-866-232-4528
www.nidcr.nih.gov

*This publication is not copyrighted.
You may make as many photocopies as you need.*

NIH Publication No. 25-7340
June 2025

NIH...Turning Discovery Into Health®