

Children need healthy teeth. Healthy teeth help them to chew and to speak clearly. Baby teeth also make space for adult teeth. Babies need to have their teeth brushed. Before they have teeth, you should clean their gums.

Give your baby a healthy start! Here are tips to keep your baby's gums and teeth healthy.



Take Care of Your Baby's Mouth

- Clean your baby's gums after every feeding even before her first teeth come in. Use a clean, damp washcloth or a toothbrush with soft bristles and a small head made for babies.
- When your baby gets her first tooth (usually around 6 to 10 months), begin brushing her teeth with toothpaste with fluoride (floor-ide) twice a day. Use a small smear of toothpaste.



- Brush the front and back of your baby's teeth. Lift her lips to brush at the gum line of her front teeth.
- If your baby has sore gums from a tooth coming in, give her a cold teething ring, cool spoon, or cold wet washcloth. Or you can rub your baby's gums with a clean finger.
- Germs can pass from your mouth to your baby's mouth. Do not test a bottle with your mouth to see if it is too hot. Use a different spoon to taste your baby's food. If your baby's bottle nipple or pacifier falls on the floor, clean it with water.
- Do not dip pacifiers in sweet foods like sugar, honey, or syrup.

Give Your Baby Healthy Foods

- Breast milk is best! Breastfeed your baby for 6 months or longer if you can. If you feed your baby formula, use formula with iron. Wait until your baby is 1 year old before feeding him cow's milk.
- Hold your baby while feeding him breast milk or formula in a bottle.
- Do not put your baby to sleep with a bottle filled with breast milk, formula, juice, or sugary drinks like fruit-flavored drinks or pop (soda).
- Wait until your baby is 6 months old before giving him juice. Serve juice in a cup. Do not give your baby more than 4 to 6 ounces of juice each day. Give your baby 100-percent fruit juice only.
- When your baby is around 4 to 6 months old, start giving him solid foods. Do not give your baby solid foods before he is ready. One way to tell if your baby is ready is if he can sit by himself without holding on to anything.
- As your baby begins to eat more solid foods and drink from a cup, you can wean him from the bottle. Begin to wean your baby from the bottle slowly, at about age 9 to 10 months. By age 12 to 14 months, most babies can drink from a cup.
- Do not give your baby sweets, like candy, cookies, or cake, or sugary drinks.



Get Dental Care for Your Baby

- Check your baby's gums and teeth once a month. Look for white spots. If you see white spots, take your baby to a dentist right away.
- Take your baby to the dentist by the time she is 1 year old to have her teeth and gums checked.

Keep Your Own Mouth Healthy

- Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste with fluoride, twice a day, after breakfast and before bed.
- Floss once a day before bedtime.
- Eat healthy foods, like whole-grain products, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, chicken, eggs, beans, and nuts.
- Eat fewer sweets like candy, cookies, or cake. Drink fewer sugary drinks like fruit-flavored drinks or pop (soda). Eat sweets or drink sugary drinks at mealtimes only.
- Get dental care.



A Healthy Smile for Your Baby

Tips to Keep Your Baby Healthy



Resources

Finding a Dentist

- <http://www.aapd.org/finddentist>
- <http://www.ada.org/ada/finddentist/advancedsearch.aspx>
- <http://www.knowyourteeth.com/findadentist>

Finding Low-Cost Dental Care

- <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/FindingDentalCare/ReducedCost/FLCDC.htm>

Finding Dental Insurance Coverage

- <https://www.insurekidsnow.gov>

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Taking care of your baby's gums and teeth is important. Clean your baby's gums or brush your baby's teeth, give your baby healthy foods, and take your baby to the dentist by the time he is 1 year old. If you take care of your teeth, it will help your baby's teeth stay healthy, too.