



<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/Choose+Health/Child+Health/Dental/>

Dental Care for Your Child

The American Dental Association (ADA) advises parents to teach children the importance of oral hygiene at an early age, so when they grow up they will continue good habits that will contribute to their overall health. Oral hygiene, just like diet and exercise, should be factored together when teaching children how to keep themselves healthy.

Primary Teeth

Infants are born with almost all their primary teeth developed, however they are still hidden under the gums. Your child's teeth will typically begin to erupt through the gums at around four to six months. The first teeth to erupt are usually the two bottom front teeth, followed by the four top front teeth. Teeth will continue to erupt, usually two at a time on either side of the jaw. By the time your child is 36 months old, he should have 20 primary teeth.

Primary teeth are smaller than permanent teeth and will usually have more space between them. The spaces help to make sure that there will be enough space in the mouth for their permanent teeth. The spaces also make it easier to clean in between your child's teeth.

The purposes of primary teeth are to:

- Help your child chew and bite food
- Help your child speak correctly
- Make your child look more attractive
- Save space for your child's permanent teeth
- Guide your child's permanent teeth into place



Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Baby Bottle Tooth Decay (BBTD) is caused by prolonged contact with almost any liquid other than water. This can happen from putting your baby to bed with a bottle of formula, milk, juice, soft drinks, sugar water, sugared drinks, etc. Allowing your baby to suck on a bottle or breastfeed for longer than a mealtime, either when awake or asleep, can also cause BBTD.

When liquid from a baby bottle builds up in the mouth, the natural sugars found in the liquid are changed to acid by germs in the mouth. This acid then starts to dissolve the teeth (mainly the upper front teeth), causing them to decay. BBTD can lead to severe damage to your child's baby teeth and can also cause dental problems that affect permanent teeth.

But there are steps you can take to prevent BBTD:

- **Never put your child to bed with a bottle.** If your baby needs a comforter between regular feedings or at bedtime, give the child a clean pacifier recommended by your dentist or pediatrician. By seven to eight months of age, most children no longer need feedings during the night. Children who drink bottles while lying down also may be more prone to getting ear infections.
- **Only give your baby a bottle during meals.** Do not use the bottle as a pacifier; do not allow your child to walk around with it or to drink it for extended periods. These practices not only may lead to BBTD, but children can suffer tooth injuries if they fall while sucking on a bottle.
- **Teach your child to drink from a cup** as soon as possible, usually by one year of age. Drinking from a cup does not cause the liquid to collect around the teeth, and a cup cannot be taken to bed.
- **Keep your baby's mouth clean.** Wipe your baby's gums with a wet washcloth or a clean gauze pad after each feeding. Begin brushing your child's teeth with a little water as soon as the first tooth appears. When you are sure your child will spit and not swallow, begin using a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.

Permanent Teeth

Your child will begin losing his baby teeth around the age of six or seven. The tooth will then be replaced with a permanent tooth. Your child's 20 primary teeth will be replaced by 32 permanent teeth. The first permanent teeth to emerge are usually the lower central incisors or the first molars in some children. Most of your child's permanent teeth will be in place by the age of 13. Wisdom teeth usually come in between the ages of 17 and 21.

The ADA recommends that children see a dentist no later than their first birthday, yet only three out of five children have seen a dentist before kindergarten. By then, more than half (52%) of six, seven, and eight year olds have tooth decay, according to the Healthy People oral health update.

The following are some more age-by-age tips offered by the ADA:

- **Schedule your child's first visit to the dentist by their first birthday.** By doing so, you can help establish a positive relationship between your child and the dentist. In addition to checking for decay and other problems, your dentist will teach you how to properly clean your child's teeth daily and identify your child's fluoride needs. In many instances, the first dental visit is a "well-baby" check up" for teeth. By starting visits at an early age, you will be helping your child build a lifetime of good dental habits.
- **Begin flossing** when teeth start touching other teeth
- Until they are six or seven years old, continue to brush your children's teeth twice a day with a child's size toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste, floss their teeth once a day. Children younger than this do not have the motor dexterity to brush all the teeth surfaces. By age six or seven, children should be able to brush their own teeth twice a day but will still require supervision until about age 10 or 11. Your dentist can help you determine whether your child is brushing and flossing properly.
- Look for a dentist that is a pediatric specialist. They have two years of extra training in pediatric dental care.

Options for the Uninsured



CHIP—Children's Health Insurance Plan

- For more information about CHIP dental benefits and dentists, call Public Employees Dental Program (PEDP) at 801-366-7555 or toll-free 1-800-765-7347.

Medicaid

- Apply at your local Workforce Services. For more details, call Medicaid information at 801-538-6155 or 1-800-662-9651.

"Give Kids a Smile" month

- Every February participating dentists offer free exams and discounted prices. Call the Utah Dental Association for a list of participating dentists.

Mountainlands Community Health Center

- To get on the list for dental services you must pre-qualify by calling the Dental Receptionist at 1-800-429-2012.

Community Health Connect

- Those in need to dental care can be connected with dentists in the community that will provide services at a discounted price or on a charity basis. To apply you can fill out the form online at www.communityhealthconnect.org or go to the office at 250 W. Center St. Suite 111 in Provo. For questions call 801-818-3014.

Compiled and Reprinted from:

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2000). *Baby bottle tooth decay*. Retrieved February 4, 2008, from http://www.medem.com/medlb/article_detaillb.cfm?article_ID=zzzkbw52r7c&sub_cat=11.

American Dental Association. (2005). *Fact sheet—Children's dental disease*. Retrieved February 5, 2008, from www.ada.org.

American Dental Association. (2005). *Good oral health for mother & baby*.

Welcome Baby. (2007). *Say cheese! A lesson on dental care, Playgroup #9*.

Community Events

- **Ready to Learn**—March 19th, Utah County Health Department, 12—1 p.m., receive a complimentary book, RSVP stephanie.anderson@byu.edu and put "Welcome Baby, Yes" in the subject line or call 422-1807.
- **Nutrition Class**—If interested in a private home lesson on nutrition and cooking, call Jackie Robins at 801-376-9559.
- **Spanish Parent Group**—March 27th, Topic: "Infant Massage", Utah County Health Department, Rm. #1600, 6—7 p.m.
- **Car Seat Safety Class**—March 6th at 10 a.m. and March 24th at 4:30 p.m., Utah County Health Department, Rm. #2700
- **Library Fun**—Check your local library for fun reading events and classes.