



# Tooth Care

## Before Your Baby is Born

What you eat when you are pregnant is important. Eating right will help you and your growing baby stay healthy. Follow your doctor's advice for eating the right foods and taking vitamins. It's also time to think about how you'll feed your baby. Remember, breast-feeding is best! Breast feeding is protective against cavity formation. Formula is actually cariogenic (meaning it increases the risk of tooth decay)

## Protect Your Baby's Teeth with Fluoride

**Fluoride** (said like *floor-eyed*) protects teeth from tooth decay and helps heal early decay. Fluoride is in the drinking water of many towns and cities. Ask your local water company if your water has fluoride in it. If it doesn't, talk to your dentist or doctor about giving you a prescription for fluoride drops for your baby.

## Check and Clean Your Baby's Teeth

**Check your baby's teeth** **Healthy** teeth should be all one color. If you see spots or stains on the teeth, take your baby to your dentist. **Clean your baby's teeth** as soon as they come in with a clean, soft cloth or a baby's toothbrush. Clean the teeth at least once a day. It's best to clean them right before bedtime. At about age 2, most of your child's teeth will be in. Now you can start brushing them with a small drop of fluoride toothpaste. Young children cannot get their teeth clean by themselves. Until they are 7 or 8 years old, you will need to help them brush. Try brushing their teeth first and then letting them finish. Be sure that you put the toothpaste on the brush----use only a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.

## Feed Your Baby Healthy Food

Choose foods that do not have a lot of sugar in them. Give your child fruits and vegetables instead of candy and cookies. Limit juice to 4 ounces daily and give with meals. Do not give juice to infants before 6 months of age. It is best to avoid juice completely and give only milk and water.

## Prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle at night or at nap time. *(If you put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill it only with water. )* Milk, formula, juices, and other sweet drinks such as soda all have sugar in them. Sucking on a bottle filled with liquids that have sugar in them can cause tooth decay. Decayed teeth can cause pain and can cost a lot to fill. During the day, do not give your baby a bottle filled with sweet drinks to use like a pacifier. If your baby uses a pacifier, do not dip it in anything sweet like sugar or honey. Near his first birthday, you should teach your child to drink from a cup instead of a bottle.

## Take Your Child to the Dentist

Ask your dentist when to bring your child in for his first visit. Locally, most dentists want to see a child by his or her second birthday. At this first visit, your dentist can quickly check your child's teeth.