

# Keeping Baby's Mouth Healthy

## Fact Sheet

*Baby teeth help your child to eat, talk and smile.*

*They also hold space for adult teeth so that they grow into the right position.  
Developing good habits early help keep adult teeth healthy.*



*Your child will get 20 baby teeth (primary teeth), 10 on the top and 10 on the bottom. Some baby teeth are not replaced by permanent teeth until a child is 12 years old.*

	<i>When teeth "come in"</i>	<i>When teeth "fall out"</i>
<i>Upper</i>	7-12 mos. 9-13 mos. 16-22 mos. 13-19 mos. 25-33 mos.	6-8 yrs. 7-8 yrs. 10-12 yrs. 9-11 yrs. 10-12 yrs.
<i>Lower</i>	20-31 mos. 12-18 mos. 16-23 mos. 7-16 mos. 6-10 mos.	10-12 yrs. 9-11 yrs. 9-12 yrs. 7-8 yrs. 6-8 yrs.

### Before teeth appear

- Like all parts of the body, your baby's mouth needs to be cleaned too.
- Clean your baby's gums morning and night using a soft, clean, damp washcloth.



### When teeth appear

- Brush with a small, soft toothbrush twice a day.
- Use a small circular motion with a rice-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste.
- Brush the inside, outside and chewing surface of teeth.
- Lift the upper lip and look for chalky-white or brown areas along the gum line of the front teeth. This can be a sign of tooth decay.

### Don't share germs

Tooth decay is caused by bacteria. Avoid putting your child's spoon or pacifier (if you have chosen to use one) in your mouth. Adults have cavity-causing germs that can be passed to your child. When you don't share germs you help prevent tooth decay.



## Drinks, and keeping your baby's teeth healthy

Liquids (other than water) that sit in the mouth for a long period of time or are sipped can often lead to cavities. All babies need their mouths cleaned regardless of how they are fed.

If breastfeeding, continue to do so. If your baby uses a bottle, avoid putting your child to bed with one. If you do put your baby to bed with a bottle, use only water.

Offer milk in an open cup during meals and snacks. Babies should be weaned off bottles by 18 months of age.

Sippy cups are not recommended and sweetened drinks should be avoided. Offer water to quench thirst.

## Healthy snacking

Once children start snacking, help them develop good eating habits by choosing snacks that are healthy, sugar-free and that don't stick to teeth. Healthy snacks include cheese, small soft pieces of fruit or vegetables, yogurt, milk and eggs. Avoid sweet and sticky foods that can cause tooth decay, such as pop, cookies and crackers, dried fruit and rolled up fruit snacks and candy.

**Eating fruit is better than drinking fruit juice. If you do give juice, make sure it's 100 per cent fruit juice, only offer 4 to 6 ounces a day and only at meal or snack time.**

## Teething

- Teething is natural. Teeth start to work through the gums around 6 to 10 months of age. This is a guide as each child is different.
- Teething may cause some pain to your baby. Signs of teething include: drooling, crankiness, sore gums, chewing on things.
- To help your baby when teething offer a clean, damp, cool washcloth to chew on or a cooled teething ring.
- Massage your baby's gum with a clean finger.
- Do not give teething biscuits and do not use a teething gel – it can numb the throat.
- High fever and diarrhea are not from teething.

## First dental visit

All babies should see a dentist or dental hygienist by the age of one year. They will check to see if your baby is at risk for tooth decay and answer any of your questions.

## Think your child might have a dental problem?

The health unit provides free dental screening for children. Your child may be eligible for free dental care through the **Healthy Smiles Ontario program**, which offers care for children age 17 and under.

For more information, or to book a dental screening appointment, call

**705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8804**