

## How do you do it?

- Brush with fluoridated toothpaste twice daily and floss every day.
- Use fluoride rinse before bedtime to help rebuild teeth.
- Chew gum with xylitol (a natural sweetener that reduces the cavity-causing germs in the mouth) four to five times a day, especially after eating.
- Limit sweet and high-carbohydrate snacks, such as soda, candy, crackers and chips. These foods feed the germs that live in the mouth and cause cavities. When you do eat these foods, brush afterwards. If brushing is not possible, rinse your mouth with water.
- Continue to get regular dental care while pregnant. This includes preventive care, along with fillings and emergency dental services as needed. Receiving dental care while pregnant is safe and recommended. Once you have a newborn baby, it will be hard to find the time to get to the dentist, so do it now.
- If you have nausea and vomiting, it is important to reduce the acid in your mouth (it can damage your teeth).
  - ~ Eat small amounts of nutritious snacks during the day.
  - ~ If you vomit, rinse your mouth. Put 1 teaspoon of baking soda in a cup of water and use this to rinse. Be sure to spit after rinsing. Do not brush right after vomiting; this can damage the surface of your teeth.

*“Getting in the habit of cleaning Mason’s mouth even before he had teeth made it easier to brush his teeth as they came in.”*

*—Sarah, Olympia, WA*

## Taking Care of Baby

### First steps to your baby’s oral health

You can start taking care of your baby’s oral health even before your little one’s teeth come in. Cavities can happen as soon as the first tooth pokes through, so it’s important to clean infant teeth and gums regularly.

### Get started with cleaning

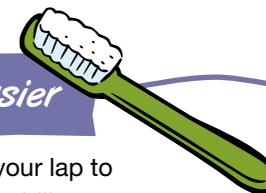
Before teeth begin to come in, gently clean your baby’s gums with a clean soft cloth after each feeding. This will help your baby get used to having his gums (and later teeth) cleaned. As soon as your baby’s teeth start to come in, you can begin to clean his teeth and gums with a small soft toothbrush and a smear of fluoridated toothpaste — about as big as a grain of rice.

### Preventing early decay at bedtime

If you give your baby a bottle or sippy cup at nap time or bedtime, be sure it contains water only. Juice, formula, milk and breast milk can cause tooth decay.



### Tips to Make Cleaning Easier

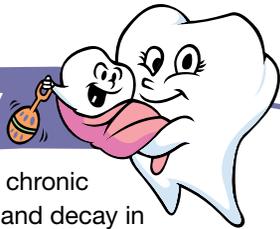


- Try placing your baby’s head in your lap to make it easier to brush. Gently stabilize your baby’s head.
- Lift or lightly press your baby’s lips away from the teeth.
- Use a small soft toothbrush. Brush every surface of your baby’s teeth. Move the brush in tiny circles. You can use a clean damp cloth instead of a brush if you and your baby prefer. Use a smear of fluoridated toothpaste — about as big as a grain of rice.

## Protect your baby from the germs that cause tooth decay

Be careful not to put things – food, pacifiers, utensils – in your mouth and then in your baby’s mouth. Many parents “clean” pacifiers by putting them in their mouths and then giving them back to their babies, but cavity-causing germs are easily passed to infants and toddlers this way. Germs can also be shared when parents test food or share utensils with their child. No matter how careful you are, your baby will get some of your germs, so keeping the germs down by taking care of YOUR oral health is important.

### *Baby Teeth Are Important!*



Dental disease is the most common chronic disease of early childhood. Cavities and decay in baby teeth can also spread to permanent teeth, causing painful and costly damage. **BUT YOU CAN PREVENT THIS!** Regular preventive care and a healthy diet can help prevent decay. Also, remember to schedule your child for an oral health screening by her first birthday.

#### *Healthy baby teeth:*

- Allow your child to chew and eat properly
- Help your child speak clearly
- Shape your baby’s face
- Guide adult teeth into place

#### *Dental decay in baby teeth affects your child’s overall health.*

- Cavities can be painful
- Cavities can interfere with your child’s ability to eat well
- Dental disease can affect your child’s overall health and development

## Here Come the Baby Teeth

### Preparing for your child’s first tooth

Teething usually starts around 6 months of age, and most children have all 20 of their baby teeth by age 3. Recording baby teeth as they come in is a great way to keep track of your baby’s development. *On page 36 of this booklet you will find a chart that you can use to record your child’s teeth as they come in.*

### Signs of teething

- Drooling and fussiness.
- You may be able to feel or even see teeth pushing in under your child’s gums.

### Comforting your teething baby

- Offer a cold, firm, safe and clean teething object, like a teething ring or slightly frozen damp washcloth. Rub your child’s gums gently with a clean finger.
- Clean your baby’s teeth and gums with a soft, clean, cool damp cloth if a soft toothbrush is uncomfortable.

*“Henry started crying a lot at about 6 months. At first I was worried something was wrong. When I realized it was his teeth coming in, a cold teething ring was all he needed to make us both feel better.”*

*– Sarah, Seattle, WA*

