



PARENTS CENTRE

Where parenting is everything!

Ask a CBE - When do I need to start looking after my baby's teeth?

You may be surprised to hear that good oral health for your baby starts as early as in the womb!

Babies teeth start developing in the first 3 months of pregnancy even though you may not actually see them until baby is around 6 months old.

Due to the change in hormones during pregnancy, women can sometimes experience gingivitis; this produces a swelling, bleeding or tenderness in the gums. Regular dental checks and personal care of the mouth are important for reducing this. Dental check-ups are recommended throughout pregnancy and the ideal time is between 14-20 weeks.

Poor oral health and periodontal disease (gum disease) is associated with adverse pregnancy problems such as miscarriage, premature labour, pre-eclampsia and low birth weight babies.

Quick Tips to Prevent Early Tooth Decay in Babies

- Start cleaning your baby's teeth twice a day as soon as you see the first little tooth bud emerging. If you start early, your baby will get used to having his teeth cleaned. Until your baby's do teeth appear, wipe gums and teeth with a wet facecloth or gauze.
- Do not test bottle temperature by first placing it in your mouth.
- Do not transfer food from your mouth to your baby or infant's mouth.
- Do not let your baby sleep at the breast or with a bottle of formula or juice.

The main cause of tooth decay is sugar. It's not just the amount of sugar that can be harmful, but how often it's eaten or drunk throughout the day.

Every time your baby has something sugary, it starts to break down the mineral surface of his teeth. Your baby's teeth can recover after eating something sugary, but it can take hours. If your baby has something sweet at regular intervals throughout the day, his teeth won't have time to repair themselves.

Only offer your baby sugary food and drink at mealtimes, so that there will be several hours between the times he has something sweet. This includes dried fruits, which are high in sugar and stick to teeth, as well as fruit juices and fruit smoothies.

If you want to give your baby a snack between meals, choose savoury options such as cheese or vegetables.

To really give your child the best chance of healthy teeth, you should also:

- Only offer breastmilk, formula milk, or cooled, boiled water as drinks for your baby.
- Avoid fruit juices, flavoured milk and fizzy drinks. These usually contain lots of sugar and cause tooth decay.
- From around six months, give your baby drinks from a sipper cup.
- Provide your baby with a healthy, balanced diet. Encourage savoury foods such as vegetables and pasta, and don't add sugar to food.
- If you use prepared baby foods, check that they are sugar-free or have no added sugars or sweeteners. Be aware that other sugars, such as lactose, fructose and glucose, are just as harmful to your baby's teeth as plain sugar.
- If your baby needs to take medicine, choose sugar-free versions.

“The importance of a child’s first teeth should never be underestimated -- they help the child to eat and speak and also help the adult teeth to come in straight,” says Dr. Worth. “An early dental visit allows the dentist to diagnose and correct any abnormalities that could affect the child’s oral health and overall growth and development.”

<file:///C:/Users/Liz%20Pearce/Downloads/15%20Oral%20Health%20Guidelines.pdf>

<http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/first-year/6-12-months/caring-your-babys-teeth>

<http://www.babycentre.co.uk/a554806/caring-for-your-babys-teeth#ixzz4IgirVSeu>

<http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/g/gingivitis-periodontal-disease/>