

Happy Teeth

Healthy Teeth Begin at Home





Your baby's first teeth are important.

Children need their teeth for eating, talking and smiling. All teeth are important. You can help take care of your children's teeth.



Did you know you can catch tooth decay?

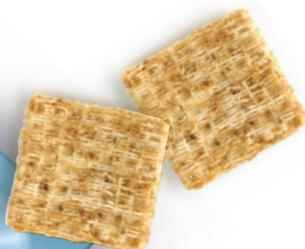
- Babies are not born with the germs that cause tooth decay.
- Germs are given to your baby by sharing pacifiers, spoons, cups and toothbrushes.

- Never put anything in your baby's mouth that has been in anyone else's mouth.
- Cut off pieces of food to share with your child, don't bite them off.



Eat healthy foods for healthy teeth.

- Offer your child cheese, plain yogurt, fruits or vegetables for snacks.
- Provide milk at meal time only.
- Water is a good drink choice for healthy teeth.
- Limit sweet drinks, fruit juice, candy, dried fruits and other sweets that can cause tooth decay.



Watch for signs of tooth decay.

When baby teeth are decayed, a child may suffer pain, eating and speech problems, and a poor self-image. If baby teeth are lost too early, adult teeth may come in crowded or out of line. Talk to your health care professional if you see any of the signs below.

- A** **White spots** are the first signs of early tooth decay.



- B** **Tan or light brown spots** are signs of moderate decay.



- C** **Dark spots and tooth loss** are signs of serious decay.



Caring for teeth at home:

- Always hold your baby when feeding a bottle. Putting your baby to bed with a bottle can cause choking and tooth decay.
- Wipe your baby's gums gently with a wet cloth after each feeding. Your baby will get used to having her gums touched.
- Start brushing your baby's teeth with a small soft toothbrush as soon as the first tooth appears.
- Young children do not brush their teeth very well. Help your children brush their teeth until they are 7 to 8 years old.
- Brush teeth two times per day.



Things health care professionals can do:



- Talk to your health care professional about your child's teeth by their 1st birthday.
- Ask your child's health care professional about fluoride for your child's teeth. Fluoride is another great way to protect your child's teeth from decay.
- Check with your dentist or health department to see if your tap water has fluoride.
- Visit the dentist on a regular basis—as often as your dentist recommends.

For help finding a dentist:

Call 1-800-322-6384 or
Visit www.insurekidsnow.gov



California Department of Public Health, California WIC Program

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