

Oral Health for Babies and Children

Why is oral health important?

- Healthy teeth and gums are important for a child's overall health.
- Tooth decay is the most common chronic, preventable disease in children.

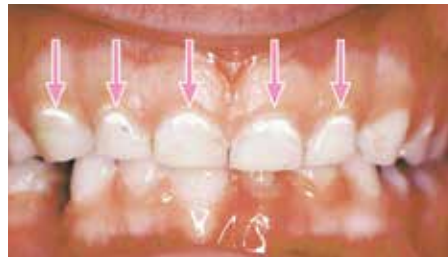
Why is it important to protect baby teeth?

- Baby teeth help children eat well and speak clearly.
- They hold the space for the adult teeth.
- Enamel on baby teeth is thinner than adult teeth so tooth decay progresses more quickly.

What does early childhood caries (ECC) or tooth decay look like?



Healthy mouth and gums.



Very early signs of decay. It can be reversed if found early.



Brown spots or decay spots across the gumline. Requires dental treatment.



Advanced decay and infection. Urgent treatment needed.

Images courtesy of South Australian Dental Service - www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/sadental

- Many children develop tooth decay from prolonged exposure to liquids containing sugars including natural sugars (e.g. formula, milk, breast milk, juice).

What is fluoride varnish treatment?



- Safe and effective protective coating that makes teeth stronger and prevents tooth decay.
- Temporary coating that sticks to the tooth surface for several hours.
- Quick and easy to apply using a small brush.

Here are a few simple things you can do to help your child's oral health:

1. Start oral care early

- Use an infant finger toothbrush or a clean, wet cloth on baby's gums.



- Lift the lip! Check your baby's teeth once a month for brown, yellow or chalky white areas.
- Infants are not born with bacteria that causes tooth decay. Bacteria is passed from parents to children through ways like sharing spoons.
- Before age 3, use a toothbrush and water. Do not use fluoride toothpaste until your child can spit.
- Fluoride toothpaste helps strengthen teeth to fight tooth decay. Only use a small, pea-sized amount.
- Help your child brush their teeth two times every day, morning and night. Children need help until they are 8 or 9 years old.



2. Choose healthy foods and drinks

- Many children get tooth decay from falling asleep while drinking liquids that contain sugar, including formula and breast milk. Natural sugars in drinks such as milk or juice can harm teeth. If your child goes to bed with a drink, only use water.
- Following all feedings, you should clean your baby's mouth and teeth.
- Have milk with meals and limit juice. Offer water between meals.
- Too many sugary drinks and foods can cause tooth decay. Choose healthy, sugar-free snacks.



3. Visit a dental clinic

- Have your child's teeth checked by a dentist or dental hygienist by age 1. They will make sure everything is healthy in your baby's mouth and will answer any questions you may have.



- If you think your child has a cavity, go to your dentist.
- If you cannot afford dental care, make a screening appointment for your child at a Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health dental clinic.

