

# 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 twice a day. 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](http://www.insurekidsnow.gov)



**California Department of Public Health, California WIC Program**

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