

J.F.K. Pediatrics/ Just for Kids Pediatrics



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Tooth Decay Prevention

How to prevent baby bottle tooth decay

- Clean your baby's teeth after each bottle or breast-feeding and after giving any medicine or cough syrup that contains sugar.
- Do not put liquids that contain sugar in your child's bottle when you put him or her to bed for naptime or at night. It is best never to give a bottle in bed.
- Do not let your child fall asleep while nursing from either the breast or bottle (especially at night).
- Do not use the bottle as a pacifier.
- Sucking is a natural instinct (need) for all babies. If your baby seems to need more time for sucking after being fed, give him or her either a pacifier or a bottle of plain water.

For bottle-fed babies

- Do not give your baby milk or other sweetened liquids at bedtime
- Avoid bedtime or naptime feedings (more than 30 minutes)
- Do not use a bottle as a pacifier
- Use the bottle for feeding only
- For toddlers, other liquids should be given in a cup
- Wean your baby from the bottle to a cup by 12 months of age

For breast fed babies

- Avoid prolonged feedings (more than 30 minutes)
- Avoid all-night feedings (do not let baby go to sleep while nursing)
- Avoid frequent, on-demand feedings

How to clean your child's mouth

- Even before the teeth begin to come in, you should clean your baby's mouth at least once a day with a clean gauze pad or soft cloth. This should become a regular habit. To clean the teeth and gums:
 1. Be sure both you and the child are comfortable.
 2. Place a clean gauze pad or soft cloth over your finger. Dip it in water so that it is damp but not soaking wet. Wipe the child's teeth and gums gently.
 3. When the child's teeth start coming in, begin to use a small, soft toothbrush to brush his teeth. Be sure to brush all surfaces of the teeth, including the gums.
 4. It is not necessary to use toothpaste, but if you do, use a small amount of non-fluoride toothpaste (about the size of a small pea).
 5. An adult should clean the child's teeth and gums at least once a day until the child is about 6-7 years old and is able to do it thoroughly themselves.