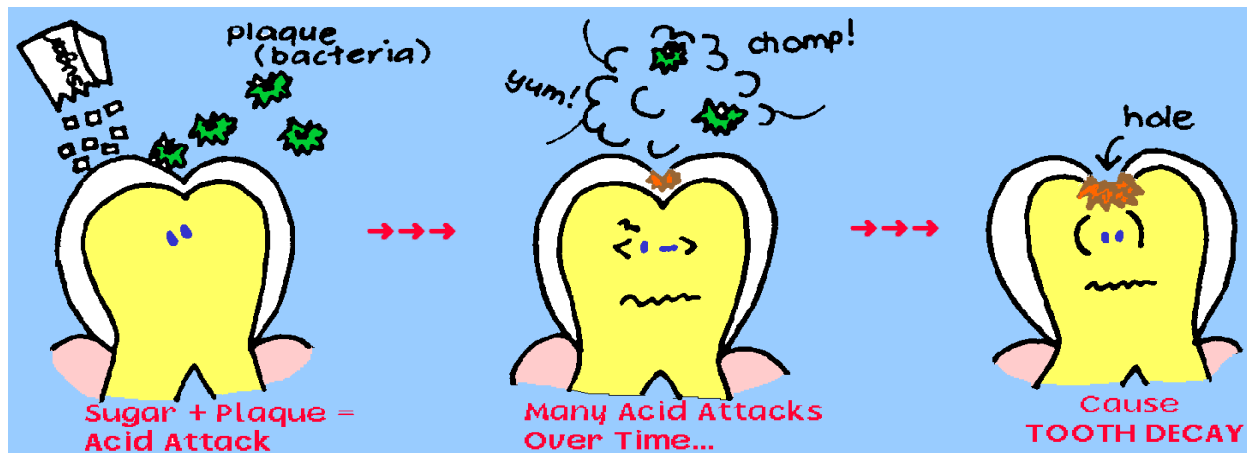


Preventing Early Childhood Caries

Early Childhood Caries, previously known as *nursing caries* or *baby bottle tooth decay*, is a severe form of tooth decay, which usually affects an infant's teeth, especially the top front baby teeth. It develops when sugars (present in milk, juice, honey and other substances) are in the mouth frequently or for long periods of time.



Early childhood caries can start soon after the first tooth appears. It is often initially seen as whitish areas on the smooth surfaces of the front teeth, towards the lips and cheek, often covered by thick plaque. Holes develop quickly. These have a brown color, later becoming dark brown. It is entirely preventable and should not occur.

This form of tooth decay is more likely to occur in infants or toddlers who:

- suck a bottle filled with a sugar-containing liquid or a pacifier dipped in a sweetener
- have a prolonged (over one year), on-demand breast-feeding habit

These habits are particularly damaging to the teeth while a child is sleeping, because less saliva is produced during sleep. Saliva has an important role in washing away the harmful acids that cause tooth decay.

- Do **not** give your child anything to drink when he or she is sleeping, except water.
- Do **not** allow plaque (a sticky, yellow/white film of bacteria) to build up on the teeth. Plaque increases the risk of decay.

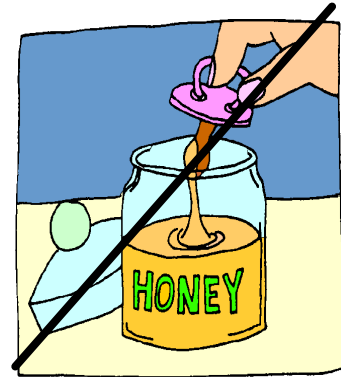
Prevent Early Childhood Caries - Suggestions for Changing Habits

- Give your baby the bottle only at feeding times or when your baby is hungry. Take the bottle away as soon as your baby has had its fill. Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle containing anything other than water.
- Try using an alternative comfort at bedtime: a teddy or a security blanket, try singing or telling a bedtime story.
- Do not let your child walk around with a bottle filled with a sugar-containing liquid.
- Replace the bottle with a cup at around 6-12 months of age.
- Do not dip the pacifier in sweetened substances.
- Remember, water is best when your baby is only thirsty.
- If your child has difficulty going to sleep or its sleeping pattern causes you concern, contact your baby's doctor or **telephone INSERT RESOURCE HERE**

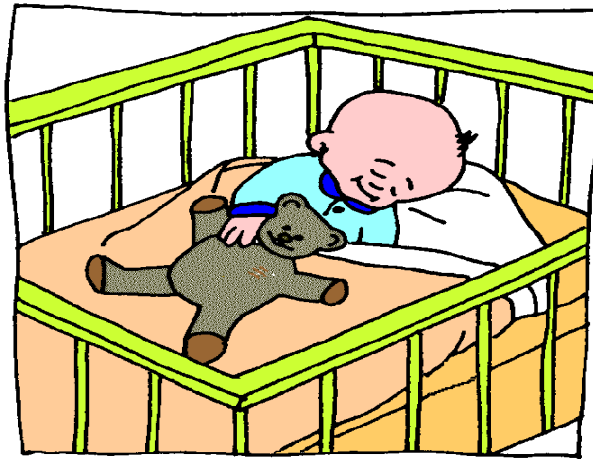
Remember:

Tooth decay is entirely preventable. To prevent caries:

- Clean your infant's teeth daily;
- Use the bottle only at feeding times;
- Do not put sweeteners on the pacifier;
- Do not use sweet food and drinks as rewards;
- Take your child for a dental check-up at around 2 years of age.



For more information and advice, contact your **dentist or local school dental therapist**.



Dental Checklist for Infants and Toddlers

Birth to 6 months

- ___ Clean mouth with gauze after feedings and at bedtime.
- ___ Ask your pediatrician or pediatric dentist about fluoride supplements.
- ___ Regulate feeding habits.

6 to 12 months

- ___ First tooth should appear; time to see the pediatric dentist for an exam.
- ___ Begin to brush teeth after each feeding and at bedtime with small, soft-bristled brush.
- ___ Baby begins to walk; be alert to dental injuries.
- ___ Wean from breast or bottle by first birthday.

12 to 24 months

- ___ Follow schedule of exams and cleanings recommended by pediatric dentist.
- ___ Start using pea-sized portions of fluoridated toothpaste when child is able to rinse.
- ___ Most primary teeth have erupted.

Can add promotional message here:

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