

Little Teeth Are a Big Deal!

Taking care of your baby's teeth – A great way to show them you love them!

Early Childhood Caries (**ECC**) or Baby Bottle Tooth Decay is the term for rotten teeth in children under 6 years of age. Each year in the NWT up to 300 infants and toddlers have surgery to remove rotten teeth.

What causes Early childhood caries?



Too Much Sugar*

- Giving baby a bottle in bed (with anything but water)
- Putting any fruit juice or sweet drink (like pop or fruit drinks mixed from a powder) in a bottle or sippy cup
- Frequent sweet snacks or sips of juice between meals
- Adding sugar to food or drinks



Dirty Teeth*

Not cleaning baby's mouth or brushing teeth often or well enough causes dirty teeth.

If mom does not brush often or well enough or has cavities in her own mouth she is going to pass on the bad bacteria to baby by:

- Chewing food for baby or tasting baby's food
- Sharing a toothbrush with baby
- Cleaning a soother in her own mouth
- Kissing baby on the mouth

Here is how to keep baby's mouth healthy*

Bottle and Sippy Cup

- **Don't put baby to bed with a bottle** (unless it is plain water)
- If giving baby juice, **serve unsweetened juice** in a regular cup only (½ cup per day at the most)
- **Wean baby off the bottle** and sippy cup to a regular cup by 14 months



Mouth and Tooth Care

For Mom:

- **See dental professional for regular care** starting early in pregnancy
- Brush teeth regularly

For Baby:

- **Starting from birth**, wipe baby's gums twice a day with a clean damp washcloth (especially before bed)
- Once first tooth is in, **brush baby's tooth with water only**. After one year of age, use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste
- See dentist by **first birthday**



Eating Habits

For Mom:

- **Eat a healthy diet** rich in calcium and Vitamin D when pregnant
 - ▶ **Foods that have Vitamin D:** milk, fatty fish and fish oils, egg yolks
 - ▶ **Foods that have calcium:** milk, yogurt, cheese, canned salmon or sardines with bones

For Baby:

- **Breastfeed** for up to 2 years and beyond
- Give breastfed babies a **Vitamin D supplement**
- After 6 months of age, **feed baby a healthy diet** adding foods rich in calcium and Vitamin D as they are ready (introduce milk, yogurt and cheese after 9 months)



NWT Prenatal Nutrition Program



Northwest Territories Health and Social Services

By Taking Care of your baby's teeth, you can prevent Early Childhood Caries

Tips for parents:

- Breastfeeding provides babies the best nutrition and promotes a strong jaw and healthy teeth
- Brush baby's teeth twice a day as soon as the first tooth comes in
- Use a soft infant toothbrush and water before baby is one year
- Sing a song while you wipe baby's gums or brush their teeth – try "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"
- Use the 2 for 2 rule – brush baby's teeth for **TWO minutes TWICE a day** (especially before bed)
- It's easier to brush when your baby is lying down, in a feeding position, on a change table, or on a couch or bed with their head on your lap
- Taking care of your own teeth shows your baby that brushing is important and can be fun!



No sweets for your sweetie



You may feel like you are giving your baby a treat, but giving your baby candy, chocolate or sugary drinks like sweetened juice, drinks made from powder, pop, or lemonade is bad for their health and teeth.

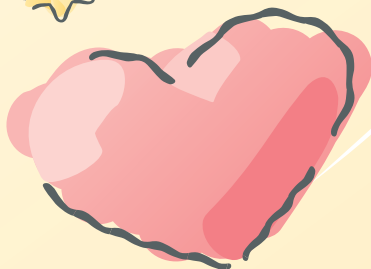
Here are some healthier ways you can show your baby you love them:

- Breastfeed your baby!
- Read a book together
- Play a game
- Go for a walk
- Sing a song
- Clean your teeth together!



Baby teeth are important for:

- Chewing
- Speaking
- Jaw development
- Guiding adult teeth into place – if there are no teeth to hold their spot, adult teeth may come in crooked and crowded
- A healthy happy smile!



Moderate decay



Severe decay

Lift the Lip!

Once a month check for white or brown spots on your baby's teeth. Lift the top lip and look closely along the gum line of the top front teeth. Decay often starts there. If you see any whitish lines or brown areas, go see a dental professional in your community. If this service is not available in your community, see the nurse at your local Health Centre.



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For more information contact your local CPNP program, Health Centre or Regional CPNP Nutritionists.

*Information adapted from Healthy Smile Happy Child Project 2004 (The Manitoba Collaborative Project for Prevention of Early Childhood Tooth Decay)

