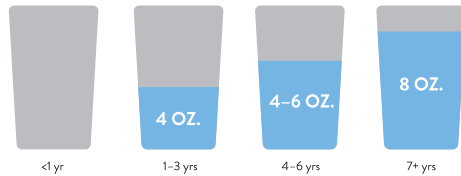


Tooth Decay

What Is It And How To Avoid It

When we consume food or drinks that break down into sugars, the bacteria in our mouth are also being fed! They then produce acid which can break down our teeth and cause cavities. With each exposure, acid can continue to attack our teeth for 20 minutes more. You can minimize your child's chances of developing tooth decay by:

1. LIMITING THE FREQUENCY OF SUGAR AND REFINED CARBOHYDRATES



The American Association of Pediatricians recommends **no juice before age 1**. Maximum allowance for older children above.



Discontinue bottle use after age 1 to avoid slow, prolonged exposure to sugar in milk or formula

Starches made from white flour (chips, bread, pasta or crackers) are simple carbohydrates and break down into simple sugars, feeding the acid-producing bacteria. It is best to serve these in one quick sitting and then follow with water or brushing. Alternatively, serve cheese or fibrous fruits and vegetables, which have a detergent effect on the mouth.

2. GOOD ORAL HYGIENE TO REMOVE PLAQUE WHICH CONTAINS THE ACID-PRODUCING BACTERIA



The American Association of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that you brush your child's teeth with fluoridated toothpaste **twice a day**, from the time when they erupt until they are at least 6 years old.



When attempting to brush your child's teeth, position them so that you can see their mouth (sitting on the counter or lying with their head in your lap) and **place the brush at a 45 degree angle against the gum line**. Focus on 2-3 teeth at a time in circular motions and make sure to brush the front, back and chewing surfaces of all teeth. Finish by brushing the tongue to remove bacteria and refresh your child's breath.



For children under 3, a smear or **grain of rice size** amount of toothpaste is recommended. For children over 3, a **pea-sized** amount is suggested.



If your child has spaces between his or her teeth, these areas do not need to be flossed.



If your child's teeth are touching, plaque cannot be removed by a toothbrush alone. Floss these areas nightly. Rub the floss against the sides of adjacent teeth, not just up and down between the teeth.

Wipe your baby's gums with a clean wet towel. This keeps the oral environment clean for erupting teeth and gets your child accustomed to oral hygiene.

At night, do not give your child anything to eat or drink after brushing and flossing because their teeth will be dirty again. Unless stated otherwise by a pediatrician, infants over the age of six months should not be allowed to fall asleep on the bottle or while nursing. Cavities grow fastest overnight!

It is important to take care of baby teeth because untreated decay can cause pain and infection. Also remember that primary teeth are holding space in the jaw for permanent teeth. If they are lost early, permanent teeth have issues coming in and orthodontics is often required. Please note that children who have untreated decay in their baby teeth are at higher risk to have decay in their permanent teeth.



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