



Caring for Your Child's Teeth—12 to 24 Months

Caring for your child's gums before and after the first tooth erupts is critical to preventing tooth decay. The following information can help you prevent decay and ensure your child's oral health during the first 12–24 months.

Why are baby teeth so important?

Baby teeth, also known as primary teeth, serve as “placeholders” for adult (secondary) teeth. If they are lost too early, due to tooth decay, the remaining teeth can shift and block adult teeth from coming in.

How does tooth decay affect babies?

Decay in baby teeth can cause pain, affect speech development and may make eating painful—resulting in poor nutrition. If left untreated, tooth decay can spread, resulting in life-threatening infection.

What steps should I take to protect my child?

- **Brush!**—at least two times per day, brush your child's teeth using water on a baby toothbrush with soft bristles.
- **Limit juice**—make sure your child does not drink more than one small cup of juice per day, and limit juice intake to mealtimes only. If your child requires a sippy cup while playing or riding in the car, fill it with water.
- **Schedule a dental check-up**— we recommend that your child have his/her first dental visit as soon as eight teeth have erupted or at 18 months, whichever comes first. This exam provides early detection of tooth decay and also ensures proper tooth eruption and alignment. During your child's first visit at our practice, we will clean your child's teeth and treat them with fluoride. This treatment helps to strengthen and fill porous baby teeth, while reducing the chances of developing a cavity by 50%.

How can I find out more about protecting my infant's oral health?

We, at Pediatric Dentistry of Clifton Park, are here to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Your child's oral health is our priority!

Sources:

Infant Oral Health Guide; Children's Hospital Boston Children's Hospital Primary Care clinic; Wanessa Risko, MD, ScD, Romi Webster, MD MPH, Man Wai Ng, DDS MPH. 9-2006
How to Prevent Tooth Decay in Your Baby; American Academy of Pediatrics, copyright 2007
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