

Monthly Message: Healthy Teeth are Important!



**KENTUCKY GOVERNOR'S
OFFICE of EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Ready to Grow, Ready to Learn & Ready to Succeed

Dental disease is the most common chronic disease of early childhood. Cavities and decay in baby teeth can also spread to permanent teeth, causing painful and costly damage. But you can prevent this! Regular preventive care and a healthy diet can help prevent decay. Remember to schedule your child for an oral health screening by his or her first birthday.



Healthy baby teeth:

- Allow your child to chew and eat properly.
- Help your child speak clearly.
- Shape your baby's face.
- Guide adult teeth into place.



Dental decay in baby teeth affects your child's health.

- Cavities can be painful.
- Cavities can interfere with your child's ability to eat well.
- Dental disease can affect your child's overall health and development.



Avoid early cavities.

Milk, formula, juice, and other drinks such as soda all have sugar in them. If sugary liquids stay on your baby's teeth too long, it can lead to tooth decay. (And decayed teeth can cause pain for your baby.) Avoid putting him or her to bed with a bottle—at night or at nap time.



How to help keep your children's teeth healthy:

- Check and clean your baby's teeth.
- Clean them as soon as they come in with a clean, soft cloth or a baby's toothbrush. Clean them at least once a day. It's best to clean your child's teeth right before bedtime. Young children cannot get their teeth clean by themselves. Until they are 7 or 8 years old, you will need to help them brush. Try brushing their teeth first and then letting them finish. Healthy teeth should be all one color. If you see spots or stains on the teeth, take your baby to a dentist.



Nutrition

- Children need strong, healthy teeth to chew their food, speak and have a good-looking smile. What's more, a good diet is essential for a child's growth and development. To help control the amount of sugar your child consumes, always try to read food labels and choose foods and beverages that are low in added sugars.
- Choose foods without a lot of sugar in them.
 - Give your child fruits and vegetables for snacks.
 - Save cookies and other treats for special occasions.



Take your child to the dentist.

Your child should have a dental visit by his first birthday.

What to Expect at Your Child's First Dental Visit

As soon as your child's first tooth appears, it's time to schedule a dental visit. The ADA recommends that the first dental visit take place within six months after the first tooth appears, but no later than a child's first birthday. Don't wait for them to start school or until there's an emergency.

Get your child comfortable as early as possible with good mouth health habits. Although the first visit is mainly for the dentist to examine your child's mouth and to check growth and development, it's also about your child being comfortable.

To help the visit go smoothly

- Consider making a morning appointment when children tend to be rested and cooperative.
- Keep any anxiety or concerns you have to yourself.

Children can pick up on your emotions, so emphasize the positive.

- Never use a dental visit as a punishment or threat.
- Never bribe your child.
- Talk with your child about visiting the dentist.



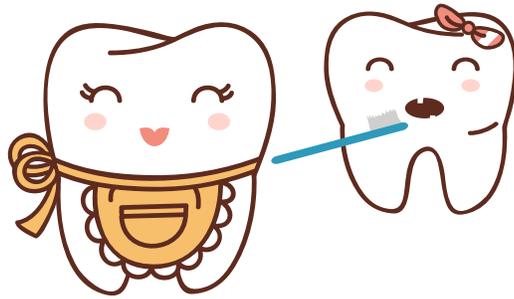
During this visit, you can expect the dentist to:

- Inspect for oral injuries, cavities or other problems.
- Let you know if your child is at risk of developing tooth decay.
- Clean your child's teeth and provide tips for daily care.
- Discuss teething, pacifier use, or thumbsucking habits.
- Discuss treatment, if needed, and schedule the next check-up.

Healthy teeth are important—even baby teeth.

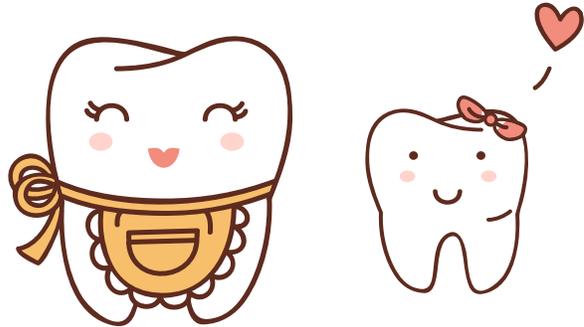
Why are you cleaning your baby's teeth? She hardly has any!

The dentist said brushing my baby's teeth as soon as they come in can keep her from getting cavities and avoid damaging her permanent teeth when they come in!



But don't baby teeth just fall out?"

Yes, but before they fall out baby teeth can decay and cause pain for the baby. And baby teeth are important - they hold space for adult teeth!



Children need healthy teeth to help them chew and to speak clearly.

When do you have to start taking care of a baby's teeth?

As soon as they come in. Teeth can start to decay as soon as they appear in the mouth!

"I'll have to start thinking of those things soon!"

