

# STARTING A LIFETIME OF SMILES:

## DENTAL CARE FOR CHILDREN 0-12 MONTHS

One of the most important things to do as a parent is to promote good oral hygiene for your child as well as yourself. This should start as early as possible. Busy, new parents need to take the time for their own dental health as this can provide lasting benefits for your new baby. Read on!

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Babies are not born with bacteria in their mouths. Bacteria is transferred to the baby by everyday contact such as kissing, feeding, and playing. Be sure to maintain excellent oral hygiene to reduce the number of bacteria in your mouth to decrease the risk of them being passed on to your baby.
- It is totally normal for babies to suck their thumb, finger or pacifier. However, prolonged sucking can lead to some concerns including protruding front teeth, misalignment of the upper and lower jaws and malformation of the upper palate. These signs can sometimes be seen as early as two or three years of age. The amount of the damage usually relates to the frequency, intensity and duration of the habit. Parents should also look for the stress factors that might be causing the continued sucking. At First Impressions Dental, we feel pacifiers are a better option than finger sucking because the habit is easier to break as parents have more control over the conditions and timeline of its use.
- The first teeth generally appear between from 6 and 14 months, and are usually the lower or upper front teeth called the central incisors. The eruption of teeth in your infant will vary and may be 10 to 12 months from the average ranges and still be normal. Every baby's teething schedule is different. Use the chart below as a general rule of thumb as to the eruption schedule.



### TEETHING

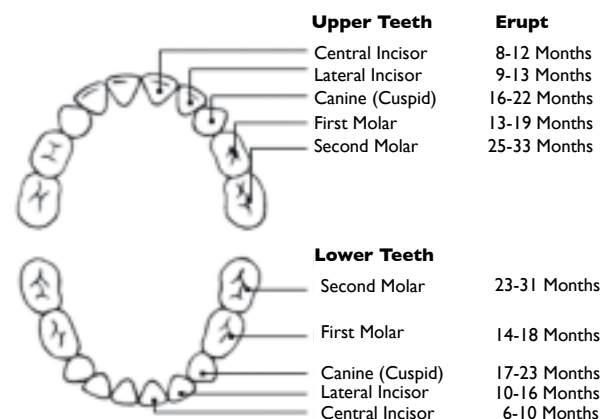
- Teething can vary in every infant depending on the age of eruption of the primary teeth. Teething is often associated with daytime restlessness, an increase in amount of finger sucking, an increase in drooling and possibly some loss of appetite. The gums may appear red before the appearance of the tooth and cause some temporary pain that should subside after a few days. Parents should always be on the watch during teething and check with their pediatrician if symptoms include fever, nausea or congestion.

### CLEANING AND CARING FOR THE INFANT TEETH

- A baby's mouth will form plaque from bacteria (germs) and food. Plaque is a film containing a sticky substance that coats the teeth and sets the stage for decay and gum disease. Bacteria uses food to produce an acid that causes tooth decay and harm to the gums. Regular cleaning of your infant's gums and teeth helps to ensure a healthy and happy baby.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO:

- Babies should never be put to bed with a bottle containing anything other than water, as it can result in severe tooth decay.
- If using a pacifier, never dip the pacifier in anything sweet like honey, attach the pacifier to a cord, string or a ribbon for fear of strangulation, or use a bottle nipple for a pacifier.
- Discard pacifiers that show signs of wear or breakdown. Bulbs that are swollen, cracked or sticky should be discarded.
- Never leave a child unattended with a pacifier or let an infant sleep with a pacifier.



# STARTING A LIFETIME OF SMILES: CHILDREN - 12 MONTHS (CONT...)

- If you are nursing and must take prescribed medication, ask your doctor about any effects the medication may have on your baby and ensure the medication is safe to take during breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding mothers who require medication are advised to breastfeed immediately before or shortly after taking the dosage. Your breast milk will have the highest amount of the drug dosage one to three hours after you've taken the drug.
- Start to clean your baby's mouth and gums as soon as possible with a soft cloth or infant toothbrush.
- Once your infant's teeth begin to appear (as early as 4 months old), they should be cleaned twice a day.
- If teething pain is making your baby restless or uncomfortable use a clean, chilled teething ring to help alleviate the pain or Children's Tylenol elixir to help reduce pain and swelling. Benzocaine ointment, such as baby Orajel, should not be used as it may cause numbing of the throat and may cause your baby to choke if too much is used.
- Have your main source of drinking water evaluated for fluoride content. If your supply is too low, consider fluoride supplements to help strengthen the developing teeth.

Baby teeth will appear very white, like shiny perfect pearls. The progression of eruption of your baby's teeth should be monitored as your infant is growing. Most babies will have 12 teeth by the time they are 18 months. By the time they are three, 20 teeth should have appeared. Any missing or extra teeth can lead to a discrepancy in your child's bite and should be looked at by a dentist. The current recommendation by the American Dental Association suggests that a baby's first dental visit should begin 6 months after the eruption of the first tooth, or around one year of age.

Yellowish-brown stained teeth, white chalky areas, and/or teeth that chip easily are one of the first signs of decay. You can see this on the picture below. These teeth should always be saved when possible, as the baby teeth help to keep space for the permanent teeth as well as aid in chewing, language, and head and jaw development.

## INFANT FEEDING

In terms of preventing dental decay, here are some tips concerning infant feeding:

- Breast feeding is recommended until age one.
- If bottle feeding, always hold the infant while feeding, do not prop the bottle up to let the baby feed alone.
- Only put formula/breast milk or water in the bottle.
- Never put the baby to bed with a bottle.
- Discourage nighttime at-will nursing.



## BEDTIME ALTERNATIVES TO BOTTLES:

- Clean Pacifier
- Rocking
- Back Rub
- Reading or Singing
- Keep in mind that crying is normal, after a few nights your baby should go to bed peacefully.
- If your child is having a lot of difficulty giving up the bottle filled with juice or milk at bedtime, try slowly replacing the juice or milk with water, adding more water to the juice or milk each time. Eventually, your child will become used to a bottle with only water.

## TODDLERS AND LIQUIDS

- Ideally sugar-free drinks.
- No "liquid grazing", or drinking liquids other than water at random intervals during the day. Sippy cups can contribute to this. If a child is thirsty, give them water. Try to keep milk or juice in a normal cup so that your child is not walking around with a sippy cup for lengthy periods of time and exposing their teeth repeatedly to sugars in the beverage.
- Stick with water between meals.
- Sugars and citric acids in fruit juice cause cavities.
- Eat regular meals and sugar free snacks such as string cheese.
- Milk also has a form of sugar, lactose, which can cause cavities. Give milk with meals.

