

TRAINING CUPS

CHOOSE CAREFULLY, USE TEMPORARILY

FROM BABY BOTTLE TO CUP

As soon as teeth appear in the mouth, decay can occur. One of the risk factors for early childhood caries (ECC, sometimes called baby bottle tooth decay) is frequent and prolonged exposure of a baby's teeth to liquids containing sugar—including milk, formula, and juice.

Tooth decay can occur when a baby is put to bed with a bottle that contains any beverage other than water. Infants should finish their naptime or bedtime bottle and have their teeth cleaned before going to bed.

Because tooth decay can destroy the teeth of an infant or young child, parents should encourage their children to drink from a cup by their first birthday.

FOR SIPPING SUCCESS, CAREFULLY CHOOSE AND USE A TRAINING CUP

As the first birthday approaches, encourage your child to drink from a cup. As this changeover from a baby bottle to training cup takes place, be very careful:

- What kind of training cup you use
- What goes into the cup
- How frequently your child sips from it
- That your child does not carry the cup around



THE BEST TRAINING FOR YOUR CHILD? NO VALVE!

There is a large and confusing selection of training cups (also called sippy cups or tippy cups) for sale. Unfortunately, many if not most of these are “no spill” cups—nothing more than baby bottles in disguise. “No spill” cups include a valve beneath the spout, which stops spills. However, cups with valves do not allow your child to sip. The only way your child can get liquid from a cup with a valve is by sucking (just like a baby bottle). This defeats the purpose, as it prevents your child from learning to sip from a cup.

Therefore, when shopping for a training cup, avoid those that have no-spill valves. A useful training cup will have a snap-on or screw-on lid with a spout. If you can find a cup with two handles, that may be best. A useful cup may also be self-righting, with a weighted base that pulls the cup upright when it tips, keeping spills to a minimum.

If every cup you see says “no-spill”, and you cannot find a useful training cup, then just use a small plastic cup. It will keep spills small as your baby learns to use it.

Whether you choose a training cup or a small plastic cup, be patient as your baby tries holding it different ways, or even throwing it. Do not be surprised if your baby treats a training cup or small plastic cup as a plaything at first.

CUP CONTENTS AND FREQUENCY OF USE

Your child relies on you for good health. Do not let your baby constantly sip on liquids containing sugar (including milk and juice drinks) because that encourages tooth decay. Offer these liquids only at mealtimes. Saliva production increases during a meal and helps neutralize acid production and rinse food particles from the mouth. If your child is thirsty between meals, offer water in the cup.

NEVER USE JUICES OR SODA POP TO CALM DOWN A FUSSY BABY.

TRAINING CUPS CHOOSE CAREFULLY, USE TEMPORARILY (CONT...)

CARRYING THE CUP AROUND IS A BAD IDEA

Do not let your child carry the training cup around, or get into the habit of keeping it within reach while riding in a car or stroller. At-will, frequent sips of sugary liquid encourages tooth decay.

Another problem is that toddlers are often unsteady on their feet. They take an unnecessary risk if they try to walk and drink at the same time. Falling while drinking from a cup can injure the mouth or face. Do not let your child walk or run around with a cup of any kind.

Remember that a training cup should be used temporarily. Once your child has learned how to sip, the training cup has achieved its purpose. It can and should be set aside when no longer needed.



OTHER TIPS FOR YOUR CHILD'S ORAL HEALTH:

- It is beneficial for the first dental visit to take place within six months of the appearance of the first tooth, and no later than the child's first birthday. If your toddler has not had a dental check-up, schedule an exam, similar to the pediatrician's "well baby exam" for his or her teeth.
- If your physician or dentist has recommended use of a pacifier, make sure it is clean. Also, never dip a pacifier into sugar or honey before giving it to a baby.

