

Tips for Preventing Early Childhood Tooth Decay

Healthy teeth are important

Tooth decay, or a cavity, can begin with a baby's first tooth. It can cause pain, infection and other health problems. Baby teeth are important for eating, speaking and holding space for adult teeth.



AVOID sugary snacks and drinks

- Sugary foods and drinks can cause tooth decay.
- Limit the number of snack times and offer snacks low in sugar.
- Don't give more than 6 ounces of juice per day.

LIMIT the time spent sipping on a bottle or sippy cup

- When juice, soda, milk or formula stay on your child's teeth too long, the sugar in these drinks can cause tooth decay.
- Offer water – it has no sugar.
- Don't put your baby to sleep with a bottle.

BEWARE of cavity-causing germs that can be spread to children through saliva

- Don't share utensils or bites of food with your baby.
- Clean off pacifiers with water, not your mouth.
- Take care of your own teeth to reduce germs in your mouth.



Brush teeth twice a day

- As soon as the first tooth comes in, start brushing with a soft child-sized toothbrush.
- Brush with a small smear of fluoride toothpaste for children under age 3 and a pea-sized amount for children ages 3 to 6.
- Assist and supervise children until they can brush well on their own.

Begin regular dental visits by age 1

- Children should typically see a dentist every six months.
- Speak to your child's dentist or pediatrician about fluoride varnish, a coating painted on the teeth to prevent tooth decay.

Medicaid and Child Health Plus cover dental care

For more oral health information or to find a low-cost dental clinic or provider near you, call 311 or visit nyc.gov and search for "teeth."