



EMPOWER

TAKING CARE OF YOUR CHILD'S TEETH

- Clean your baby's mouth after each feeding with a clean, soft cloth. Start brushing with a soft bristled toothbrush after the first tooth comes in.
- Around age two, start brushing with a small amount of fluoridated toothpaste (about a small pea size). Be sure to have your child spit the toothpaste out after brushing. Before the age of two, consult your child's dentist about toothpaste. For some CSHCN spitting may not be possible, or at age two they are not yet ready for toothpaste. Consult your dentist if you have questions.
- Help your child brush every day until he or she is able to brush his or her own teeth, usually around age seven or eight.
- Take your child for his or her first dental visit around age one. Continue regular check-ups to prevent tooth decay and find any problems early.
- Encourage your child to eat regular nutritious meals and avoid frequent between-meal snacking. Limit the amount and frequency of sugars in their diet. This includes sweet foods (candy, cookies, fruit leathers, and raisins), snack foods (chips, crackers, french fries) and sweet drinks (soda, fruit punch, sport drinks) except as appropriate for CSHCN.

What Causes Cavities?

We all have germs in our mouths - some good and some bad. The bad germs can cause cavities or tooth decay. Germs can spread from parents/caregivers to infants and children through saliva. Avoid passing germs to your child. Do not share cups, eating utensils or food, and don't lick a pacifier to "clean" it before giving it to your baby or child.

Sweet foods or sweet drinks feed the germs that cause tooth decay. Never put juice or soda in a bottle and never put the baby to bed with a bottle; sleeping with a bottle all night or at naptime gives the germs that cause tooth decay food to grow.

Regular brushing with a small amount of fluoridated toothpaste can help prevent tooth decay.

Tooth decay can be stopped if it is caught and treated early.

