

Baby teeth are important for your child's overall health and development (e.g. eating, speaking, and the positioning of future adult teeth).

As a parent or caregiver, you play a key role in helping your child develop dental habits from the very beginning.

Benefits of Starting a Dental Hygiene Routine Early

- ✓ Helps children develop proper oral hygiene habits that can last a lifetime.
- ✓ Supports pain-free eating and proper nutrition for growth.
- ✓ Helps prevent cavities and reduce risk of tooth pain and discomfort.
- ✓ Helps prevent tooth loss and maintains space for adult teeth.

Baby Teeth Matter!



Tips to Keep Your Child's Teeth Healthy



BCDA™

BC Dental Association

British Columbia Dental Association

540-1385 West 8th Ave, Vancouver, BC

604-736-7202 or 1-888-396-9888 | info@bcdental.org



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Before Your Baby Has Teeth

- Clean your baby's mouth by using a clean, damp cloth or gauze to wipe their gums twice a day, **even before teeth appear**.

Regularly cleaning your baby's gums helps them prepare for the sensation of tooth brushing once their first tooth appears.



After Baby's First Tooth

- **Introduce toothbrushing as soon as the first tooth appears**, using a soft-bristled infant toothbrush and a rice-grain sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- **Avoid sharing toothbrushes, utensils, or soothers.** Cavity-causing bacteria can be passed from caregiver to child.
- **Bring your child to a dentist within six months of their first tooth appearing or by age one.** Your dentist can recommend a visit schedule based on your child's oral health needs.
- Lift your child's lip regularly and look closely along the gum line. Call your dentist if you notice any white or brown spots, or anything unusual. **Do not wait until your baby's next dental appointment!**



Talk to your dentist to learn more about the importance of baby teeth!



Brushing & Toothpaste

- **Brush twice a day** using fluoride toothpaste to help strengthen tooth enamel and prevent tooth decay.
Because most communities in BC do not have fluoridated water, using fluoride toothpaste is especially important for preventing tooth decay.
- Help your young child develop healthy brushing habits by **brushing their teeth for them**. Lift their lips to brush along the gum line and on all sides of the teeth.
- As a child grows and gains dexterity, they can **start brushing with support from a caregiver** to ensure all tooth surfaces are cleaned.
Many children require supervised brushing until approximately age 8-10 depending on ability.
- Once a child can reliably spit out toothpaste, use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.



Eating & Drinking

- Encourage healthy eating habits and **limit snacks high in sugar and foods that stick to teeth**.
- Encourage **plain water** from an open cup **between meals**. Constantly sipping milk, juice, flavoured or sweetened water, or soft drinks increases the risk of tooth decay.
- If sweets are offered, **serve with meals** whenever possible.



Bedtime & Through the Night

- Children should not be put in bed with a bottle.
- After the **last feeding before bed**, wipe or brush your baby's gums and teeth.
- **After brushing, offer only plain water.** Milk, formula, juice and other sweetened drinks left on the teeth overnight can cause tooth decay.