

How to Prevent Early Childhood Caries



Why Is This Baby Smiling?



She's smiling because she's happy! She is safe from early childhood caries.



Early Childhood Caries

What are early childhood caries?

- It is a serious, painful dental disease affecting infants and children.
- It is tooth decay that results from improper feeding practices.
- It may involve one or several teeth.
- It usually occurs on the upper front teeth, but can cause decay all teeth.

Early Childhood Caries

Early childhood caries may cause:



- Pain
- Many cavities
- Crooked permanent teeth
- Ear and speech problems
- Possible emotional problems



Early Childhood Caries

How might your child get early childhood caries?



Children should never be put to bed with a bottle

- If your child sleeps with a bottle.
- If your child has a bottle for long periods during the day.
- If your child sucks on a pacifier dipped in honey, syrup or anything sweet.

How can I keep my baby safe from early childhood caries?



- Keep your baby's mouth clean. Wipe their gums and teeth with a soft cloth after feeding and before bed and nap time.
- Put your child to bed without a bottle.
- Do not let your child walk around or sit with a bottle during the day.
- As soon as the first tooth appears, brush your child's teeth daily with a child size toothbrush.



How can I keep my baby safe from early childhood caries?

- Trade the bottle for a cup by 1 year of age.
- Brush your child's teeth as soon as they appear in the mouth.
- Visit the dentist regularly, starting at age 6 months - earlier if a problem exists.
- Avoid giving your child sugary foods.
- Make sure your child receives fluoride. Fluoride toothpaste, fluoride water and fluoride treatments or drops are excellent sources.

How can I keep my baby safe from early childhood caries?

Keep your and your family's teeth and mouth healthy. In this way everyone who is near your baby can help to keep him/her safe from baby bottle tooth decay.



How can I keep my baby safe from early childhood caries?

What can be used to calm and quiet your child?

- Give a security blanket, teddy bear or a plain pacifier
- Sing or play music
- Hold or rock your child
- Give back rub
- Use a musical mobile
- Read a book or tell a story



If my baby loves the bottle, how can I take it away?

Try these ideas to make it a little easier:

- **Use a plain-looking bottle for feeding: one that doesn't catch Baby's eye.**
- **Baby can learn to prefer a bright, pretty cup to the bottle. By the time he is a year old, he will not need to drink from a bottle. So, you can throw or give away his bottles when he turns one year old.**
- **Try to spend a few minutes of quiet time with your baby before bedtime, so she is calm and feels loved.**

You and Your Dentist Partners in Protecting Your Baby's Teeth

- Check Baby's mouth. Gently lift your baby's upper lip and look for white spots on his teeth. If you see white or dark spots on Baby's teeth, that may be early childhood caries. Call your baby's dentist right away!
- Take Baby to her dentist at age one year and every six months after that. If she doesn't have a dentist, ask your doctor for the name of a dentist who will see babies.

Early Childhood Caries

- The following slides show the progression of Early Childhood Caries.

Healthy Teeth

No Decay. Ask the dentist about fluoride needs.

Front



Rear



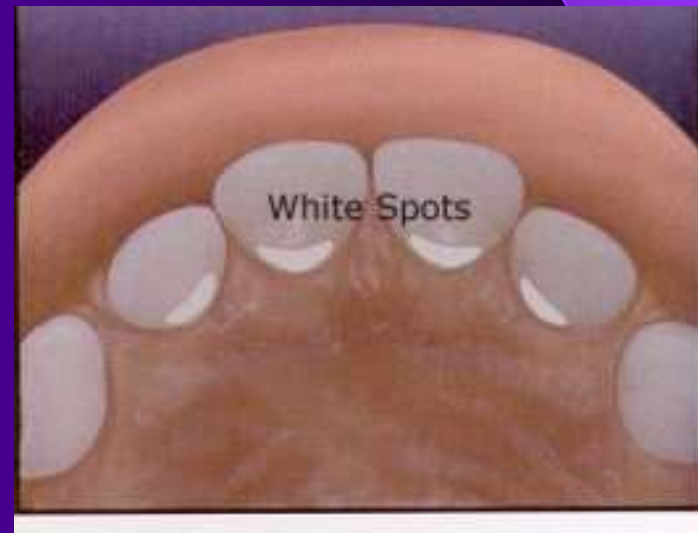
Early Decay

This stage, called the “White Spots” stage, can be reversed. If you see these kinds of white spots on your baby’s teeth, [call your dentist right away.](#)



Front

Rear



Later Decay

If your baby's teeth look like this, decay (cavities) of your baby's teeth has begun. Take your baby to the dentist right away before cavities get worse.



Front

Rear



Severe Decay

When dark spots like those below appear on your baby's teeth, **your baby needs to see a dentist right away** to avoid further tooth damage and pain.



Front

Rear



Keep your baby safe from early childhood caries.

- If your child has Medicaid, call toll-free 1-877-847-8377 (1-877-THSTEPS) Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Central Time, to ask about Texas Health Steps dental checkups and treatment.
- If you have dental insurance for your child, check with your insurance company.