



# Oral Health Tips

*for Infants, Toddlers  
and Children*

  
CareSource®



*Your baby is  
finally here!*

CareSource has some important tips to help you care for child's gums and teeth.

## Caring for Baby's Teeth

Before your baby's teeth come in, wipe gums twice a day with a soft, clean cloth. You should wipe them in the morning after the first feeding and right before bed. This will help to wipe away bacteria and sugars that can cause cavities.

**After your baby's first tooth comes in** start brushing twice a day. Use a soft infant sized toothbrush. Use plain water. For children younger than 2, talk with your doctor or dentist about using fluoride toothpaste. Only use an amount the size of a grain of rice.



By the time your child is six months old or has their first tooth you should take them to see a dentist. This helps spot signs of problems early. Your child should have a **Dental Home** by the age of one. A **Dental Home** is a place where children and adults can get regular, comprehensive care. You should take your child for dental checkups and cleanings twice a year.

## Baby Teeth Matter

Primary teeth, also known as baby teeth, are very important. Baby teeth are vital to your child's health. Children need strong, healthy teeth to chew their food, speak and have a healthy-looking smile. Their first teeth also help make sure their adult teeth and jawbones form correctly.



## Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Even though they are temporary, your child's baby teeth are vital. They can still get cavities. Tooth decay in infants and toddlers is often called "Baby Bottle Tooth Decay" or "Early Childhood Cavities." There are many things that can cause tooth decay, like drinking too many sugary drinks.

### Ways to fight tooth decay:

- Use only formula, milk or breast milk in bottles. Don't fill a bottle with sugar water, juice or soft drinks.
- Finish bedtime and nap time bottles before going to bed.
- Encourage your child to drink from a cup between age 6 to 12 months.
- Use a clean pacifier.



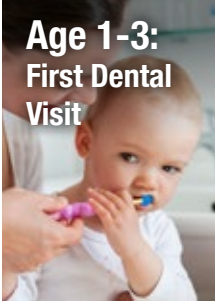
## Cavity-Causing Bacteria

Many parents and caregivers may not know they can accidentally share cavity-causing bacteria with their baby. Baby teeth easily get decay because the tooth enamel is soft at this stage. The sharing of bacteria from parents, caregivers and older siblings to their baby happens mainly through salivary contact. There are a few ways this can happen:

- Kissing an infant's lips, or "nibbling" on their fingers and toes
- Sharing eating and drinking utensils
- Pre-chewing food for infants or blowing on food to cool it
- Sharing the same food item
- Sharing toothbrushes or toothbrushes touching
- Cleaning pacifiers with the mouth

# Dental Milestones

## Age 1-3: First Dental Visit



- Your child's teeth will be actively erupting (becoming visible in the mouth). The first dental visit should take place after their first tooth appears and no later than age 1.
- By age 3 they should have a full mouth of teeth.
- If your child has not seen a dentist yet, now is a perfect time.

## Age 5-6: First Lost Tooth



- Around age 5 or 6 children start losing baby teeth. Then permanent teeth start to come in, starting with lower front teeth.
- It usually takes from age 6 to 12 years old for your child to lose all their baby teeth and get their final adult teeth (except the wisdom teeth).
- Your child should visit the dentist twice a year for exams and preventive care. Talk to their dentist about dental sealants to protect their adult molar teeth and fluoride.

## Age 12+: All Adult Teeth



- The 12-year molars come in around age 12 or 13. All your child's regular adult teeth should be in by now.
- Your child may need treatment with medically necessary braces if they have certain dental issues. Some issues might be overlapping, overcrowding or an incorrect bite. Your dentist may suggest you talk with an orthodontist.
- Most teenagers will not have enough space in the jaw for the third molars to come in. They may need to be removed to avoid future problems.
- Healthy eating habits and protecting teeth during sports are vital. See CareSource Tips for Teens brochure to learn more.





## 8 Tips for Healthy Teeth and Gums

- 1. Use Proper Oral Hygiene Habits** - Brush twice a day and floss once a day. When your child turns 3, start teaching your child how to brush. Use no more than a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste.
- 2. Replace Toothbrushes** every three months.
- 3. Start Dental Visits Early** – Start by age 1 and get regular cleanings for all members of your family.
- 4. Ask your dentist about dental sealants and fluoride to protect your child's teeth.**
- 5. Eat a Tooth-Healthy Diet**—Limit sugary snacks and drinks. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits. For dairy don't give children under 12 months unpasteurized products. Also start giving them 4 to 6 ounces of water per day.
- 6. Play it Cool** - Talk positively about dental care to reduce anxious feelings. Most dentists can provide simple calming methods for children who are anxious without putting them to sleep.
- 7. Childproof Your Home** - Research shows that children under age 7 get over half of their dental injuries playing close to furniture.
- 8. Curb Thumb and Pacifier Sucking Habits**—These habits can become a problem if they go on for too long. If a child has not stopped these habits by age 3, your child's dentist may suggest a mouth appliance.

## CareSource covers dental benefits for children.

Call us or go to **CareSource.com** to learn more about your plan and coverage.

### Find a Dentist

Go to **findadoctor.caresource.com** to find a dentist. You can also call Member Services at **1-844-607-2829** (TTY: 1-800-743-3333 or 711) for questions on benefits or help finding a dentist.

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#### Nurse Advice Line

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call the toll-free number listed on your Member ID card.

You should reach out to your child's pediatrician or dentist with any questions or concerns. For more resources visit **CareSource.com**.

You can also visit the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Frequently Asked Questions at [www.aapd.org/resources/parent/faq](http://www.aapd.org/resources/parent/faq).

