

ORAL HEALTH FOR BABIES AND CHILDREN

BABY TEETH ARE IMPORTANT!

THEY HELP YOUR CHILD:

- Chew and eat
- Learn to speak properly
- Hold space for adult teeth
- Develop self-esteem
- Be healthy
- Smile

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARIES (ECC)

Early childhood caries (ECC) is one of the most common, preventable diseases of childhood. It is a severe, rapidly developing form of tooth decay that affects infants and children.

ECC CAN BE CAUSED BY:

- Going to sleep or walking around with a bottle or sippy cup containing anything but water
- Too much sugar in your baby's diet
- Not cleaning your baby's teeth
- Dipping a pacifier in anything sweet
- Long-term use of sweetened medication
- Germs passed from you to your baby

IT CAN LEAD TO:

- Pain
- Infection
- Difficulty eating and sleeping
- Speech problems
- Costly dental treatment
- Poor health
- Higher risk of tooth decay in later years



YOU CAN HELP PREVENT TOOTH DECAY

Clean your baby's mouth every day, even before teeth appear. Use a clean, soft, damp cloth to wipe gums, insides of cheeks and the roof of the mouth. As soon as teeth appear, brush them gently using a small, soft toothbrush and water. Brush 30 minutes after each feeding or at least twice a day.

Children under three years of age should use only water or a rice grain-sized amount of non-fluoridated toothpaste unless otherwise advised by their oral health professional. A green pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste is suggested for children three years of age and older if they are able to spit.

Children up to six years of age are not able to brush their teeth properly, so you will have to do it for them. Let them have a turn brushing when you are done. Let your child watch when you brush your own teeth. When your child's teeth are touching, start flossing them once a day.

Lift your child's lip each time you brush to check their teeth. If you see white chalky spots or brown spots, take your baby to see a dentist.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-800-361-5653
TTY: Dial 711
york.ca/Dental

FIRST BIRTHDAY - FIRST DENTAL VISIT

All babies should visit a dentist or a dental hygienist by one year of age or within six months of first tooth eruption, and regularly thereafter. They will make sure everything is healthy in your baby's mouth and will answer any questions you may have.

Regular dental care, every six to nine months, can prevent cavities and other dental problems. Poor oral health can negatively impact growth and development and lead to medical conditions later in life.

DID YOU KNOW?

When actively breastfeeding, the tongue's position around the nipple and the nipple's location in the back of the mouth protect the teeth because milk goes directly down the baby's throat.



HOW FOOD AFFECTS THE RISK OF CAVITIES (TOOTH DECAY)

Germs in your child's mouth react with sugars in food and drinks to form a mild acid. Over time, this acid can make holes or cavities in teeth. The more often your child's teeth are exposed to sugar, the more damage it can do.

Breastmilk, infant formula, 100% fruit juice and milk, including plant-based beverages, contain natural sugars that can harm a baby's teeth if left to sit in the mouth.

TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CAVITIES:

- Offer only water between meals and snacks
- Limit sweets to mealtimes (there is more saliva in the mouth at mealtimes and that helps to dilute the sugars and wash them away)
- Limit the amount and frequency of sugary, sticky snacks, including puffs, rusks, fruit snacks and pouches
- Read the ingredient list on food labels; limit or avoid foods/drinks that have 'sugar' listed as one of the first ingredients
- Take the breast or bottle out of your baby's mouth as soon as your baby falls asleep to prevent milk from pooling in the mouth which can increase the risk of cavities
- Avoid giving your baby a bottle or sippy cup in bed, unless it only contains water
- Help your baby use a cup instead of a bottle; an open cup can be introduced as early as six months of age
- By 12 months, use an open cup for all your child's beverages
- Avoid using mesh feeding bags because they increase the length of time the sugars in the food are on your baby's teeth
- If your child uses a pacifier, avoid dipping it in anything sweet, including syrups, sugar or honey
- Avoid putting your child's spoon or pacifier in your mouth or sharing other eating utensils (adults have cavity causing germs which can be passed to your child)
- Brush your own teeth at least twice a day and visit the dentist regularly to prevent spreading germs
- Try to brush your child's teeth 30 minutes after meals and snacks or rinse your child's mouth with water



FOOD FOR HEALTHY TEETH

Use Canada's Food Guide and offer a variety of foods. Eating well is good for your growing child's teeth, gums and overall health.

Try these “teeth-friendly” snacks

- Beans, chickpeas and edamame
- Cheese and cottage cheese
- Dry, unsweetened cereal
- Fruits and vegetables
- Fruit smoothies made with frozen fruit and milk
- Hard boiled eggs
- Plain rice cakes
- Unsweetened, full-fat yogurt
- Whole grain crackers, pita or bagels

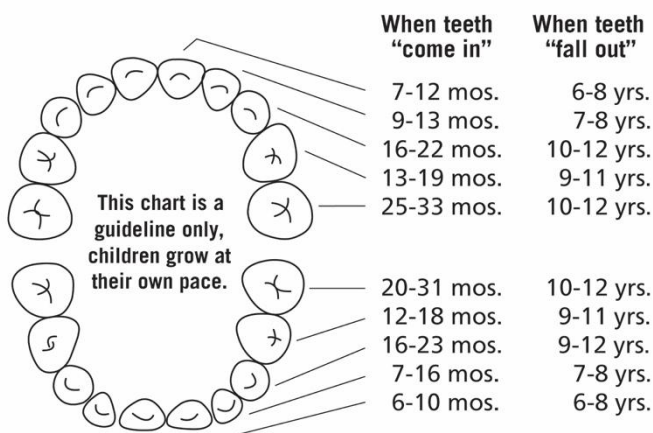
Foods that increase risk of cavities

- Fruit snacks, bites and gummies
- Dried fruit, like raisins
- Juice, including 100% fruit juice
- Sweetened milk/plant-based beverages
- Sugary beverages, including sports drinks, soda and fruit drinks
- Candy and sugared gum

TEETHING IS A NATURAL PROCESS

Your baby is born with a set of 20 teeth hidden under the gums. Teething is the process of these teeth working their way through the gums.

The first teeth usually appear between six and ten months, with the rest following over the next two to three years. This is only a guide – each child is different.



COMMON SIGNS OF TEETHING

When children are teething, they may:

- Drool
- Chew on things
- Have red cheeks and red, swollen gums
- Be cranky and irritable; show changes in appetite

Do not confuse teething with illness.

Getting new teeth does not make babies or children sick. Do not ignore a fever. If you aren't sure whether your child is teething or sick, check with your child's doctor.



TIPS TO HELP YOUR BABY COPE WITH TEETHING

- Offer your breastfeeding baby the breast for pain relief and comfort
- Rub their gums with a clean finger
- Give your baby a hard, smooth object such as a teething ring, which can feel good on their gums
- Give your baby a clean, wet washcloth that has been chilled or frozen
- Don't rub teething gel on baby's gums; they may swallow it or it may numb the back of their throat and cause a choking hazard
- Don't give teething biscuits because they may contain added or hidden sugars

If your baby is still unhappy, your dentist, doctor or pharmacist can suggest an over-the-counter pain medication

WHERE TO GET HELP

If you think your child has a cavity, go to the dentist.

If you cannot afford to take your child to the dentist, make a screening appointment for your child at a York Region Public Health dental clinic.

Clinic locations include **Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Sutton** and **Vaughan**.


Your child may qualify to receive dental treatment at no cost through the **Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) program**, if you meet financial eligibility criteria and they are 17 years of age or under.



For more information, to make an appointment at a York Region Public Health dental clinic, or to apply online for the HSO program, visit york.ca/Dental

To speak directly with a dental professional from the York Region Public Health Dental Program, call **1-877-464-9675 ext. 74388**

HEALTH CONNECTION

 For parenting supports or to speak with a registered nurse, contact Health Connection. Call **1-800-361-5653** or chat live at york.ca/NurseChat

We provide free, confidential information, advice and resources, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. After hours, leave a message, we will contact you during operating hours.

To learn more, visit york.ca/HealthConnection

You can also call 811 to speak with a registered nurse 24/7 or chat live at ontario.ca/health811

