

## Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

By Hema Patel, DDS



Hi, in this session, I will try to answer some of the questions that most of the parents raise in our office and the questions are,

Why are baby teeth so important? Aren't they going to fall anyway?

What is the baby bottle tooth decay and how to prevent it?

Why it is very important to keep those small teeth clean?

Children need strong, healthy teeth to chew their food, speak and have a good-looking smile. Baby teeth also keep a space in the jaw for the adult teeth. If a baby tooth is lost too early, the teeth beside it may drift into the empty space. When it's time for the adult teeth to come in, there may not be enough room. This can make the teeth crooked or crowded.

As soon as teeth appear in the mouth, decay can occur. One serious form of decay among young children is baby bottle tooth decay.

It's very important to understand what baby bottle tooth decay is and how to prevent it. So let's take a closer look at that aspect.

Decay in infants and children is called baby bottle tooth decay. It can destroy the teeth and most often occurs in the upper front teeth. But other teeth may also be affected.

What causes baby bottle tooth decay?

Decay occurs when sweetened liquids like milk, formula and fruit juice are given and are left clinging to an infant's teeth for long periods. Bacteria in the mouth use these sugars as food. They then produce acids that attack the teeth. Each time your child drinks these liquids, acids attack for 20 minutes or longer. After many attacks, the teeth can decay.



It's not just what you put in your child's bottle that causes decay, but how often and for how long a time. Giving your child a bottle of sweetened liquid many times a day isn't a good idea. Allowing your child to fall asleep with a bottle during naps or at night can be really harmful to your child's teeth.

How to prevent the baby bottle tooth decay?

Sometimes parents do not realize that a baby's teeth can decay soon after they appear in the mouth. By the time decay is noticed, it may be too late to save the teeth. You can help prevent this from happening to your child by following the tips below:

- Clean your baby's teeth and gums as we discussed previously after each feeding.
- Never allow your child to fall asleep with a bottle containing milk, formula, fruit juice or sweetened liquids.
- If you must give your baby a bottle as a comforter at bedtime, make sure it contains only water. And never dip a pacifier into sugar or honey.
- Avoid filling your child's bottle with liquids such as sugar water and soft drinks.

- If your local water supply does not contain fluoride (a substance that helps prevent tooth decay), ask your dentist how your child should get it.
- Start dental visits by the child's first birthday. Make visits regularly. If you suspect your child has dental problems, take the child to the dentist as soon as possible.

If you have more questions regarding your children's teeth or would like to find out **How to raise cavity free kids**, please feel free to call me at 510-796-1656 or write me at [hp\\_dds@yahoo.com](mailto:hp_dds@yahoo.com) and we'll be glad to send out a **FREE** comprehensive report.

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